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THE ADDRESS

OF

William H. Brodnax,

(OF DINWIDDIE)

IN THE

HOUSE OF DELEGATES OF VIRGINIA,

ON THE

POLICY OF THE STATE

WITH RESPECT TO ITS

COLORED POPULATION.

DELIVERED JANUARY 19, 1882.

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☞ The following speech is published at the request of a number of the friends of General Brodnax, who approve of the peculiar views which he presented on a subject of general interest, and especially for the information of his immediate constituents, among whom some incorrect impressions are believed to exist as to the character of his opinions.

HOUSE OF DELEGATES OF VIRGINIA.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 1832.

MR. GOODE of Mecklenburg, rose to move the following resolution.

Resolved, That the select committee raised on the subject of slaves, free negroes, and the melancholy occurrences growing out of the tragical massacre in Southampton, be discharged from the consideration of all petitions, memorials and resolutions, which have for their object, the manumission of persons held in servitude under the existing laws of this commonwealth, and that it is not expedient to legislate on the subject.

MR. RANDOLPH moved the following substitute, to be inserted after the word "Southampton:"

— “be instructed to inquire into the expediency of submitting to the vote of the qualified voters in the several towns, cities, boroughs, and counties of this commonwealth, the propriety of providing by law, that the children of all female slaves, who may be born in this state, on or after the 4th day of July, 1840, shall become the property of the commonwealth, the males at the age of twenty one years, and females at the age of eighteen, if detained by their owners within the limits of Virginia, until they shall respectively arrive at the ages aforesaid, to be hired out until the nett sum arising therefrom, shall be sufficient to defray the expense of their removal, beyond the limits of the United States, and that said committee have leave to report by bill or otherwise.”

THURSDAY, JANUARY 19, 1832.

On motion of MR. BRODNAX of Dinwiddie, the resolution moved by Mr. Goode, and the substitute therefor proposed by Mr. Randolph, on the subject of the colored population of the commonwealth, were taken up; when

MR. BRODNAX rose and addressed the house. He commenced by remarking that the peculiar position which he occupied, in relation to the important subject which had engaged their consideration for some days past, rendered an explanation of the course he had pursued, and of his views and opinions, necessary. This position, said he, as is known to the house, has in a great degree, arisen out of circumstances over which I could not, with delicacy or propriety, have exerted any efficient control: and some explanation becomes the more necessary, from the numerous successive phases which the subject has assumed at different periods of its discussion. Without the slightest change having taken place in any principle, or opinion, which I originally entertained, the question itself is now presented in an attitude and *manner* so altered by supervenient occurrences, as to render it proper for me to pursue the object, which I have from the first kept steadily in view, by the adoption of a course entirely different from that which, under other circumstances, I had prescribed to myself. My opinions, as an humble individual member of this house, however unimportant to the community at large, are important to myself, and to those generous constituents who have confided to me the high trust of representing their interests in this most important session of the legislature which has occurred since the foundation of our government. Yes, sir, the agitation of this very question has imparted an interest to our proceedings greater (whatever may have been said or thought of any session which has preceded it in our history, or even of that which was the immediate

predecessor of the present), far greater interest than has attached to any previous measure of a Virginia legislature since the revolution. A subject, sir, of deep and lasting importance to the prosperity, perhaps to the very existence of the commonwealth, has suddenly sprung up since we were invested with our trust, and demands investigation and decision.

When my friend from Mecklenburg, introduced the original resolution now before us, I regarded it as an unfortunate one. I sincerely regretted the movement, while I was convinced of the purity and patriotism of motive which had dictated the course of its worthy and intelligent author. So far from saving labor to the committee, or operating an economy of time in the house; so far from subduing that excitement which was diffusing itself over this assembly, and over all Virginia, or correcting any of those erroneous and alarming impressions as to the character of the measures we were likely to adopt, which were said to have been circulated in newspapers, and to have gone forth to the world, I believe that its tendency and effects would be of a precisely opposite character; and that while it *might* do much mischief, it *could* produce no good. I regarded the movement as itself, eminently calculated to aggravate the evils, and increase the embarrassments it was intended to repress. Had those petitions from Hanover, which have since obtained so inflated a celebrity, been permitted, on their presentation, to take the ordinary course, without opposition, and without comment, the whole matter would have glided on smoothly, without creating that morbid excitement of which they have since been the fruitful source. And afterwards, had the committee been uninterrupted in its progress, in due time it would have reported the result of its deliberations, which, I have no doubt, would have been adverse to any legislative action at present on the subject of the abolition of slavery; and then the house would regularly have entertained the subject, in the ordinary mode, unaccompanied by any of those factitious and collateral circumstances of excitement which now obviously surround it.* I consider the subsequent motion to discharge that com-

* On the 16th of January, 1832, MR. BRODNER, from the committee on the colored population, presented the following report:

"The select committee, to whom was referred certain memorials, praying the passage of some law providing for the gradual abolition of slavery in the commonwealth, have, according to order, had the same under consideration, and have come to the following resolution thereupon:

Resolved as the opinion of this committee, That it is INEXPEDIENT for the present legislature to make any enactment for the abolition of slavery."

This report, in which Mr. B. concurred, illustrates the correctness of the impression above expressed, both as to the *character* of the report, and the *time* at which it might be expected from the committee. And on the question of the reference of the Hanover petitions, which prayed the abolition of slavery, Mr. B. although in favor of their reference, in common with a vast majority of members, had expressed his individual opinion to be unfavorable to any legislative enactment for the abolition of slavery, without the consent of the owners, and compensation for the property. The reason why the above report was not made from the committee at an earlier day, was simply that a majority of the committee decided that it was expedient to act on, and dispose of, so much of the subject referred to them, as related to the free negroes, *previous* to their taking up that which related to the slaves—believing, as they did, that the former was preliminary in its character, and that ulterior measures on the latter and more important branch of the subject, were naturally and essentially dependent on what might be determined on, with regard to the former. This is the simple solution of that, to which some affected mystery and importance are attached in the recent numbers of "Appomattox;" and as the committee consisted of a decisive majority of those who hold the same opinions with the author of those essays, it is not a little remarkable that he should

mittee from the consideration of a subject which had been referred to them by a very large majority, and in effect to reverse that decision, when it was known, that in some shape or other, and at some time during this very session, the great question involved, would have to be met and discussed, and decided; and this too, after permitting weeks to elapse, while the committee was assiduously engaged on other branches of its duty preliminary to this—during which, “rumour with her hundred tongues,” was allowed an unrestrained influence far and wide; and when, at length, after a tempestuous voyage, we were in sight of land, with every probability of a report from the committee within very few days, and probably before this discussion itself could terminate—as irregular and injudicious. And, sir, I entertained a decided opinion that this great question itself, would have been more effectually put at rest; that the community would have acquiesced with greater satisfaction in any determination we might have come to; and that a more abiding and permanent effect would have rested on our labors, had the investigation been approached, conducted, and disposed of, in the usual parliamentary mode, which the experience of ages has indicated as the most favorable to calm deliberation and correct decision. With these views, I should have been gratified had the resolution never been presented; or had it immediately been laid on the table, or indefinitely postponed. Such was the disposition of it which I should then have voted for. It has now become a matter of not the slightest importance whether it be adopted or not; for, Mr. Speaker, the aspect of this question has now become materially varied. The time has passed by when it would be discreet, if practicable, to arrest the course of this debate. It is now useless to survey the ground we have gone over, as it is too late to retrace it. We have “passed the Rubicon.” The ball has been set in motion, and who can retard its onward course? This debate has now progressed for several days; and we have, like Macbeth of old, in scenes of blood—

“Stept in so far, that though we wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.”

The house would eventually, have to act on any report from the committee; and as the subject had already occupied so much time, and could again be resumed, I consider it most expedient for the house to act in anticipation of the report, definitively on the subject at once, while it has it before it. From this consideration, I shall now vote against the further action of the committee, and as on a final settlement of the question; and I hope that other gentlemen who agree with me on the principles involved, will pursue the same course.

I have thought this preliminary explanation of the reasons of my course in connexion with these resolutions, but due to myself, to ob-

have imagined that the report was withheld from any design hostile to his views—not more remarkable, however, than that for the purpose of proving an inconsistency in different positions maintained by Mr. B. he should first have cited a portion of his speech, and then, as in conflict with it, a series of remarks, which *happened* not to have been in another part of Mr. B.'s speech, as alleged, but in that of a different gentleman; and to whom, indeed, Mr. B. was replying! The *mistake* was, no doubt, *unintentional*—but should, surely, in common justice, before this time have been corrected.

viate the supposition of any change in my opinions, or any departure from my consistency.

In coming to the great question itself, which is before us, I assure you, Mr. Speaker, in solemn sincerity, that in the whole course of my life, personal, professional, or political, I have never approached the discussion of any subject, whatever may have been its character, or on whatever arena it may have occurred, whether judicial, legislative, or popular, with any comparable degree of the feeling of responsibility which now weighs upon me. I have never before felt in all its force and impression, the absorbing interest, the tremendous responsibility of making laws for a great community. It is a feeling, I presume, sir, common to us all. Yes, sir, the humblest member in this hall may now well feel that, like another Atlas, the weight of the *world*, to some extent, rests on his shoulders. And who, sir, will regard this expression as an unmeasured hyperbole, when he reflects that any error we may now commit, must, from its nature, be irretrievable; that when we take up the line of march which is proposed to us, there can be no halting or returning; and that any false step we may now take, can never be retraced, or its direction obliterated. Will it be deemed an idea too bold, or language too strong or extravagant, that I do not circumscribe the limits of these effects to the commonwealth of Virginia, but view them as passing her borders, and by degrees extending over the *world*? Who, sir, has surveyed this subject in all its dimensions, its bearings and tendencies, proximate and ulterior, without perceiving that it involves not only the vital interests of Virginia, the interests not only of the thousands who now people her regions, and of the millions yet unborn, who are to spring up after us, but that, from its nature, it is to exert an influence which, to some extent, will operate "for weal or for wo;" on all the sister states of this great confederacy—on the free citizens of all America—on the sable tribes which inhabit the continent of Africa,—on the globe! And may I not add, sir, without impropriety or irreverence, on earth and heaven? Already had many other states shaped their systems of policy on conjectural anticipations of the course Virginia might adopt, even before this legislature assembled; and who can pretend to limit the boundaries of this influence?

This subject, sir, has long been one, with me, of anxious and painful reflection; and it is my misfortune to be unable, entirely, to concur with either of the extreme parties in this house; either with those who hold that the existence of slavery is not an evil, or that nothing can or ought to be done to abate the evil or lessen its effects: and still less with those who propose, as a remedy, a plan fraught, in my judgment, with incalculable mischiefs; which would tear up by the roots, all the ligaments which bind society together, subvert principles which have been consecrated by the wisdom of ages, and break down every barrier with which our constitution and laws have fenced the security of private property; for such is the light in which I am compelled to regard the monstrous project of the gentleman from Albemarle, (Mr. Randolph.)

Mr. Speaker, I feel deeply, the delicate embarrassment of the situation I am called to occupy. In times of high political excitement,

when counter-currents sit strongly in opposite directions, the position of the moderate man, who may not conscientiously sail on either—who is equally averse to either extreme, and believes that there is prudence, and wisdom, and safety, in the maxim, “*in medio tutissimus ibis*”—is of all others the least enviable. It is said, sometimes to be assumed from considerations of policy; but really, the individual who would commit so gross a blunder, whether he looked to the support and approbation of the friends with whom he was associated in service, or exclusively to his own political preferment, must be egregiously ignorant of the strongest impulses of human nature. Yes, sir, nothing but conscientious judgment, or folly, can ever recommend such a course. The public man, who refuses to rush headlong to the “*ultima thule*” of party, becomes obnoxious to the suspicions of the *ultra*, on both sides, and is apt to lose the confidence of all, and be regarded as a neutral by both, and an ally by neither. Or, stationed on the middle ground, he is exposed to the shots of both parties in the conflict, and can expect no quarters from either. The moderate man has also to encounter other disadvantages. He does not possess equal facilities with others, in recommending his views and opinions. For, the statesman who is disposed to listen to “the still small voice” of reason and moderation—who is willing to examine frankly and fairly, the arguments and principles of others, without regard to what party they may belong, or from what region they may have come, without considering reason and intelligence, as bounded by mountains or rivers—who is anxious to call from both, all that he finds valuable in either, while he rejects all that is erroneous, pursues a course, of a tenor too even to excite the approbation, or command the deliberate examination of those who are heated in the conflict. His course is that of the gentle rivulet, which winds its peaceful way, unseen, and unheard, through the forests and the fields, attracting little attention; while the bold and ardent partisan resembles, in debate, the noble and majestic river, on whose margin we are now deliberating, which dashes its impetuous torrent, impatient of restraint, over the rocks and cliffs which would obstruct it, and rushes in foaming fury to the ocean. The middle ground presents no field for the exhibition of that impassioned feeling—those bold and striking figures—those brilliant coruscations of a vivid imagination, which never fail to attract and engage us, and of which we have witnessed so many instances in this debate. The calm observer, unaffected himself by the enthusiasm around him, is regarded as tame and uninteresting—and deliberate judgment is little valued, when opposed to “thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.” But, sir, these considerations have little effect on me. It is true, I regret,—yes, sir, deeply regret—that I am unable to concur, not only as to our ultimate objects, which mainly are the same, but on the mode of action which expedience might indicate, with those friends in this house, to whom I am affiliated, by contiguity of residence, and identity of interest—by long established coincidence of opinion on all subjects of general policy, and by strong ties of personal regard. But, regardless of the effects which may result to myself, personally, I have but one rule of action—that is, to pursue the path of *duty* which my best judgment may point out. I may mistake its traces; no doubt I often do; but when I think

I have discovered it, I will endeavor to follow it steadily, wherever it may conduct me; and support those measures, and those alone, which I may deem most beneficial to my constituents, and most auspicious to my country.

Sir, I confidently believe that a *plan* can be devised to mitigate, if not subdue, the evil which presses so sorely upon us, entirely consistent with the principles which have been so ably and so gallantly maintained by gentlemen from my own region of country, where those principles have ever been regarded as sacred and inviolable; and yet comprehending all that our brethren from other divisions of the state, and holding other opinions, ought to desire. But, sir, unfortunately I think, both parties, in the heat of debate, have run into extremes, which may endanger the result. Mr. Speaker, never before have I felt so intensely the destitution of that intellectual vigor, that commanding influence and persuasiveness, which would enable me to imbue others with my own impressions, and carry conviction to their minds, of the truths which appear so clear and irresistible to my own. Sir, *would* that I possessed some portion of that "resistless eloquence," which

"Wielded at will the fierce democracy,
"Shook the arsenal, and fulminated o'er Rome."

I would exert it *all* on this occasion. There have indeed been already "fulminations enough;" but I would exert all my power in imploring gentlemen on both sides, to mutual conciliation and forbearance. I would exert myself to induce those who differ most widely in their views, to compromise some portion of their exactions,—not to expect—not to desire what either believes ruinous; but to unite in deliberating on some plan, from which results beneficial to both might be devised. I would beg of them by every consideration I could urge, not to "tread on the deceitful cinders" beneath us—not to peril every thing by attempting too much, or refusing to do any thing. Let us not refuse to do any thing, because we cannot obtain *all* we desire. Reason and prudence, in the common affairs of life, and in the most weighty concerns of states and empires, certainly point out a different course. Let us, in this conciliating spirit, examine the subject; and if the substitute of the gentleman from Albemarle shall be adjudged impracticable and unjust, as I trust it will be regarded by the house, let us see if some other plan cannot be devised, which will meet the occasion, and promote the interests of all, without violating the rights of any. I do in my soul believe that this will be found attainable, if dispassionately attempted. My own views of the features of such a plan, will in due time be presented to the house.

Previously to entering on them minutely, I will take occasion to state, that, in whatever I may say during this debate, I have no disposition or intention to wound the feelings of a single human being on earth. It is a delicate subject, I know—on which excitement is avoided not without difficulty; but my object shall be, to pour oil on the troubled waves, and not to lash them into fury. And if I know any thing of my own heart, I would far rather bind up an hundred wounds, than inflict a single new one, or cause an old one to bleed afresh.—And whatever construction might be put upon any hasty remarks,

which may fall from me in the impetuosity of debate, I wish them to be considered as affected by this general declaration of my feelings and dispositions.

It has now become perfectly immaterial what disposition is made of the resolution of the gentleman from Mecklenburg. The great question involved, can now be decided as well in the house while it has it before it, as by leaving it in the hands of the committee. But if the object in introducing it, was to avoid a full and free discussion of the subject, in all its bearings, it is one which I cannot approve. It is said, that any action on the subject at present, might be regarded as the result of apprehension and fear, produced by recent occurrences. Sir, for one, I am anxious to demonstrate to the world, that it is a subject which we are not *afraid* to discuss—that we are prepared, and willing to examine it, without any affectation of mystery or concealment. I do not regard it as a characteristic of true courage and manly firmness, more than of ordinary prudence, to shut our eyes and rush blindfold against danger without having examined it—but on the contrary, to survey it carefully and deliberately in all its parts, so as to calculate correctly its extent, and its capacity of injury—neither to exaggerate its importance, nor to underrate it—and to make preparations commensurate with the necessity, so as to meet it in the manner best calculated to avert or subdue it. So far as *fear* is involved, I hope we shall never be *afraid* to examine into our real situation. Individuals, and nations, are often ruined from the fear of looking their true condition in the face, in time. They avert their eyes as long as possible, from the contemplation of impending difficulties. The man in debt, is afraid to look into his accounts and ascertain the extent of his embarrassments, until they become insurmountable. By surrendering a part of his property at once, he might save the rest, and fill up the breach which imprudence had made, and by altered habits prevent its recurrence. But he avoids the reflection—continues to hold on all, until at last the storm breaks heavily upon him, and ruin awaits him. This, sir, is not the policy of the prudent individual, or of the judicious statesman. Such bravery as this, I neither profess nor admire.

But, sir, could we, by any course we could have pursued, have excluded the thorough investigation of this delicate subject? Are there not many different modes by which its discussion might be brought before us? And have not members declared their intention of doing so? Sir, the time has passed by in the history of the world, when there can be any “sealed subject” in this country. The spirit of the age will not tolerate suppression. The march of intellect on the earth—the increased spirit of inquiry and reflection—the demand in other regions for more liberal institutions—the flood of light from modern accessions to political and philosophical science, which has poured in upon us, have imparted a tone of inquisitiveness to the public mind, and rendered it impatient of any subject being enveloped in the mantle of mystery. Already had public attention been drawn to this subject before we assembled. It was a subject of general conversation, in all parts of our country, and by people of every description. It is discussed at the fire-side, at the public taverns, in the streets, and in the newspapers. The people all over the world are thinking about it,

speaking about it, and writing about it. And can we arrest it, and place a seal on the subject? We might as well attempt to put out the light of the sun, by placing an extinguisher on it, or to confine its rays "under a bushel." We live already in a new age, when the spirit of inquiry, and a thirst for the acquisition of information, is wonderfully extended; and it would be useless for us to attempt to linger on the skirts of the age that is departing. The action of existing causes and principles is steady and progressing. It cannot be retarded, unless we could "blow out all the moral lights around us;" and if we refuse to keep up with it, we shall be towed in the wake, whether willing or not. The idea of suppressing discussion, or controlling thought on any forbidden subject, is now impossible. I know that it has been assumed, that the general interest which now pervades the country on this subject, was superinduced by the agitation of it in this house. Sir, this is a great mistake. It had been induced by previous events—by causes over which we had no control—and before this body convened. The spark was indeed communicated to the tinder, by the tragical events which occurred in Southampton; but the elements for ignition, had been much longer in existence. And who *would* desire to suppress this discussion—or control the freedom of opinion—or the liberty of the press? Much complaint has been made of the course taken by the newspapers; and no doubt the licentiousness of the press is often an evil, but the beneficial effects of that great engine, are incomparably superior to its evils. For myself, I do not regret that the seal has been taken off of this subject. A regular investigation of it will render any determination we arrive at, more *satisfactory* and *quieting* to the community; and I am glad that Virginians have now an opportunity of declaring to the world, that they do not hold their slaves merely by sufferance—and of exhibiting the grounds on which their claim to them, as property, is founded. I do not admire the position often assumed on this subject—that it is a right which needs no explanation, and which shall not be examined. Sir, were some bold pretender to claim of me the very land on which my family resides, I would scarcely content myself with *assertions* of my title, and that he should not question it; but I would rather prefer to exhibit my parchments and title papers, and *defy* his scrutiny. I regard the right to our slaves, as perfect and inviolable as that to any other property we possess, and that it may safely be submitted to the most rigid examination.

That *slavery in Virginia is an evil*, and a transcendent evil, it would be idle, and more than idle, for any human being to doubt or deny. It is a mildew which has blighted in its course every region it has touched, from the creation of the world. Illustrations from the history of other countries, and other times, might be instructive and profitable, had we the time to review them; but we have evidences tending to the same conviction nearer at hand, and accessible to daily observation, in the short histories of the different states in this great confederacy, which are impressive in their admonitions and conclusive in their character. That Virginia,—originally the first-rated state in the union—the one which, in better days, led the councils and dictated the measures of the federal government, had been gradually razeed to the

condition of a third-rate state, and was destined soon to yield precedence to another, among the youngest of her daughters; that many of the finest portions originally, of her territory, now (as was so glowingly depicted the other day,) exhibited scenes of wide-spread desolation and decay, that many of her most valuable citizens are removing to other parts of the world, have certainly been attributed to a variety of causes; but who can doubt that it is principally *slavery* that is at the bottom of all—that this is the *incubus* which paralyzes her energies and retards her every effort at advancement? I presume that every body is prepared to admit and regret the existence of this evil, and that *something* should be done to alleviate or exterminate it, *if any thing can be done*, by means less injurious or dangerous than the evil itself. But, sir, it is on this point on which so much diversity of opinion exists among us. All *would* remove it, if they *could*. Some seem to think this immediately and directly attainable, while others conclude that it is a misfortune (not a crime, for we are not responsible for its introduction among us,) which no effort can remove or reduce, and that we must content ourselves to submit to it forever, and avert our eyes from the consequences which are hereafter to follow. While they admit that every hour we delay lessens the possibility of effecting any thing, they say that it is already *too late* to make any attempt which will not aggravate the evil. They would treat us like patients affected by chronic diseases believed to be incurable, by endeavoring to divert our minds from the contemplation of our real situation. Believing, however, that there is an entire coincidence of public opinion on the preliminary question involved, I deem it useless to enter into a long abstract discussion of the origin of slavery, or the evil effects which result from it. All will admit its extinction *desirable*, if *attainable*—and I cannot, therefore, like my friend from Brunswick, undertake to follow the gentleman from Rockbridge, (Mr. Moore,) in the discursive flights he has indulged in, in a general disquisition upon slavery. He translated us occasionally with electrical rapidity, first to China, and then to the Rocky mountains. He amused us for awhile on earth, and then mounted up to Heaven, Prometheus-like, to take fire from thence, with which he attempted to blind and confound our Sirens of Tarsus, as he regarded us, as we were journeying to Damascus.

The people, sir, have long deeply felt the embarrassment and importance of the subject—and, stimulated by recent occurrences, they have lately, with a simultaneous movement and united voice, demanded our interposition, and required that "*something*" should be done. Yes, sir, your table almost literally groans with petitions, from all quarters of the state, looking to us for some remedy, and crying out in language so strong, and so loud, as not to be disregarded, for *something* to be done—and, sir, *something* must be done. But they have not petitioned you to decree the abolition of slavery—or the confiscation of their property. They have not applied to you to avert an evil portentous, it is true, in its appearance, by bringing sudden and obvious ruin on them. They have not called on you to tear all their property away from them, or manumit their slaves without indemnity or compensation. No, sir, far from it. With a very few exceptions, this is a vision which had not crossed their imaginations. They have prescribed no

system, and indicated no plan. This they have submitted to the judgment and intelligence of their delegates in this assembly. They expected, and wished *us* to do something. *What is that something to be?* That is the question. Sir, let us not prescribe a remedy, like that which comes to us from Albemarle, nauseous to the palate, and far more pernicious in its effects, than the disease which it would remove.

Any scheme for the gradual diminution, or ultimate extermination of the black population of Virginia, should be based, as a substratum, on certain great cardinal principles of justice, morality, and political expediency, about which I had hoped but little diversity of opinion would be found to exist. They are such as lie at the foundation of all civilized society, and on which all free governments must rest. Any action on this subject, without due regard to those polar principles, would not only fail of its intended effects, but would be subversive of the rights of the citizen—and ruinous in its consequences. Among these, I have always regarded the following as axioms, which should never be disregarded, and from which, for one, I will never consent to depart :

1st. That no emancipation of slaves should ever be tolerated, unaccompanied by their immediate removal from among us.

2d. That no system should be introduced, which is calculated to interfere with, or weaken the security of private property, or affect its value.—And

3d. That not a single slave, or any other property he possesses, shoud be taken from its owner, *without his own consent*, or an ample compensation for its value.

Unless some plan can be struck out, in our united councils, entirely consistent with these essential principles, dreadful as would be the alternative, I will sit down in silent despair, and fold my arms with the desperate resolution, of letting the evil roll on to its horrid consummation. It may not attain it in my time, but it may in that of my children ; and the advice I would leave with those whom it has been my fortune to bring into the world, and to all who are held dear to me, if nothing can be done, would be like that given to the Jews of old, before the sacking of their celebrated city : “flee to the mountains for your lives;” or like that to the few favored inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, when about to be consumed by fire from heaven,—“stay not in all the plain.” But such, sir, is not at present my desponding view of the subject. I have come to no such painful conclusion. Much may be done if not to remove this evil, at least to abate its extent—to limit its effects—and to take from it, its most dangerous and most fearful tendencies. I do believe that a ray of light has dawned—however insufficient to illuminate the pathway of such as expect to accomplish the full measure of their wishes at once—which if steadily pursued, will, like the pillar of fire which was followed by the wise men of old, lead us to safety, and rescue us from the destruction with which we are threatened. I do believe that measures of incalculable benefit may be adopted, entirely consistent with those great principles which I have assumed ; and as I have never approved the course of those who condemn the plans of every body else, without offering any

of their own, I shall certainly submit to you, before I conclude, my own views in minute detail.

As the resolutions before you, Mr. Speaker, now stand, the first question presented in the order of discussion, is, that which arises from an examination of the plan proposed by the gentleman from Albemarle, (Mr. Randolph) for the manumission, or rather confiscation to the state, of all the *post nati* of our slaves, after a given period, and the reference of that project, to the qualified voters of the state. Sir, I cannot hesitate to pronounce the whole of this plan monstrous in its features, and in its principles tending to a disruption of all the ties which bind society together. It infringes those rights of property which, from our birth, we have been taught to consider inviolable. It abates from one hundred millions of dollars worth of property, half its value; and substantially converts all that was a fee simple, into a life estate. Let us examine it for a moment.

I would ask, Mr. Speaker, if such a measure as this can receive the sanction of the legislature, what will have become of all our constitutions, and most respected laws? What, sir, are constitutions, and charters, and bills of rights, ever made for? Are they not devised to protect the rights of the few, against the aggressions of the many? They are necessary to secure to *minorities* their privileges and their property—to stay the lawless hand of public violence. *Majorities* need no protection; they can protect themselves. And, if among these rights, there be any one held more sacred than the rest, next to the right of personal security, is that of private property. This, indeed, is in some degree, the foundation and security of all other rights under government; for, no others can exist without it.

The house need not be alarmed---I do not intend to engage in an elaborate, dry discussion, of the grave constitutional impediments which oppose the adoption of this startling proposition. It is true, that the constitutions of both our federal and state governments, have erected barriers for the protection of private property, which must be prostrated, before such a measure as this could be carried out into effect. But what are charters---or constitutions---or bills of rights, on a question like this? I would not give a rush for them; charters and compacts can be broken or evaded. The charter by which we hold our slaves, is antecedent to either; it is founded on the immutable principles of justice, which existed before the formation of political societies; it has received the approbation of man, and the sanction of his great Creator, and is written on our hearts. Under our constitutions and laws, it has acquired exactly the same guarantee, whether fortunately or not, as any other property, and it can now be regarded in no other light, legally or morally. Mr. Speaker, moral justice and political justice are always the same. And the government, in all its delegated authority, can take from not one of the humblest of its citizens, the smallest particle of his private property, in a case in which an individual could not morally or legally exercise the same right. There is to this rule, but a single exception, and that is founded in absolute necessity.—*Necessitas non habet legem*, is a hard rule, but an inevitable one. When the public safety and prosperity, obviously require the deprivation of private property, the sacrifice must be submitted to. In such a case,

the state possesses an acknowledged right to appropriate the private property of the citizen, to the general good. But upon what condition? The answer, sir, is to be found, not only in our federal constitution, but in the various bills of rights, and constitutions of all the states in our union—on making “*just compensation.*”—So that whether the public necessities require the surrender of our property or not, it comes to the same conclusion. It cannot be taken against our consent, but on paying to us its value.

But, sir, we are told that this famous plan is not intended to tear from its holders any property they possess. No, sir, it is only to relieve them of the future increase of their slaves, after the designated period. My friend from Campbell, (Mr. Rives) seems entitled to the credit of originating the idea of drawing this distinction. In his discussion of this subject, on yesterday, several ideas fell from him which demand animadversion. That gentleman is so amiable in his dispositions, and so gentle and conciliatory in his deportment and feelings, that it is impossible to doubt that every idea he advances, comports with his deliberate conviction of what is just and proper. Yet I must regard the ideas themselves, as dangerous and revolutionary. His argument went substantially to show, that however unquestionable, to the owners, was the right of property in their present slaves, the product—the future increase of those slaves—was not their property; but a subject in which they had no other interest, than that held by the rest of the community. There is certainly some plausibility in the idea, that we cannot claim property in that which is not *in esse*,—not yet in existence. But this plausibility is dissipated by the slightest reflection on the subject. The maxim, “*partus sequitur ventrem,*” is not more emphatically a rule of the common law, than it is a dictate of common reason, and of common sense. Sir, is not the probability of increase, an essential constituent in the value of a female slave?—Does not this prospect enter into the calculation of value, whenever one is purchased, or sold? Who has to bear the expense of support to the mother, while her services are withdrawn; or of nurture and maintenance to her increase, until they become valuable themselves? They are, by this plan, to be supported by the owner, until they have attained to maturity and could become useful, and are then to be withdrawn. Who would consent to raise them on these terms? Sir, this idea that the owners are entitled to the parents as property, but not to their offspring, is one on which argument is unnecessary. When the heat generated by this debate shall have subsided, the sober sense of the whole community will cry out against it. Again, sir, I will ask, whether, in that very charter which was appealed to yesterday—the federal constitution—it is not expressly provided that no *ex post facto* law shall be passed? Is not this a fundamental principle of our state constitution also, and a dictate of reason and common sense, and a principle of common justice? It might be no violation of this obvious rule of propriety—of this constitutional guarantee—(though it would certainly be very absurd)—to apply this principle to any *future* acquisition of this property. You might provide, that all individuals who *hereafter* purchase slaves should be restricted in their rights, to the enjoyment of the services of the existing generation, and that the *post nati*, if you please, should be free after a stipulated period: pur-

chasers of such property, would then act with their eyes open; and however unwise the policy might be, they would have nothing to complain of, and it would involve no infraction of that constitution which all of us have sworn to support. But what right have you to extend such a principle, to the property of individuals already acquired, and veeted in them, under the faith of existing laws?

Sir, the plan proposed by the gentleman from Albemarle, is not only inefficient in its consequences to attain the objects which he professes to have in view, but would be mischievous, in the extreme, in its application and influence. Its operation would be one of a degrading character to the state. It holds out the strongest temptation to every gentleman in the state, to convert himself into a negro-trader. This plan, which pretends to hold out freedom in view to this unhappy race, yet allows the owner to sell and pocket the value, of every one of these *post nati*, up to the very hour in which they are to be entitled to their freedom. And I will ask you one question, Mr. Speaker, to which I invite your deliberate reflection. Do you really believe, that, under the operation of this fanciful system, one single negro ever would be liberated in the state? I ask you to pause and inquire before you decide. Do you not believe that the owners of these young slaves, would hold them to the last minute in which it would be safe to do so, and then, just before their title to freedom accrued, would sell them, if there was a single market open for them in the world? Sir, the mass of mankind are always governed by their interests.—Some there are, no doubt, who would liberate their slaves, for purposes of deportation, whether such a law as this existed or not; but these would do so without the law, and surely the law itself, would never induce them to do it, or effect the freedom of a single human being.

Sir, this very feature also involves an *immoral* tendency. It is calculated, though certainly not so designed, to corrupt both master and slave. The master is presented with every inducement to hold these after-born in servitude as long as he can; and then, to evade the total loss of their value, which would otherwise result from keeping them in the state, by selling them in a foreign market. And what is the influence to be exerted on these slaves themselves, who are in this uncertain, unhappy predicament? Would not the enactment of such a law as this, hold out to them false and delusive hopes? Such as would keep them perpetually in a restless, unquiet, uncertain state of mind? With the prospect of freedom constantly in view, would be coupled the hourly apprehension, that their master, by selling them, could defeat its attainment, and dash from their lips the cup so long presented. The pains of Tantalus would be given a real existence. And would they tamely submit to such a disposition? When arrived nearly to the point of time, at which they hoped for liberation, and discovered that all their fond conceptions were to be defeated, by sale to a new master, and a less desirable situation, would they not have the strongest temptations to rebel?

Mr. Speaker, the injustice and inequality of such a system, on the African race themselves, constitutes one of its most powerful objections. A child is born to-day---another to-morrow, but after the period prescribed to entitle it prospectively to freedom. They grow up

together: hundreds and thousands in the state, in the same families, of nearly the same ages, will occupy this legal relation—some with the promise of freedom ahead of them—the others with none, knowing that some were destined to a life of servitude, while the rest were to be free. Will this inequality of condition, do you suppose, excite no restlessness and dissatisfaction among them? Will they not feel that the same principle which gives freedom to one, entitles the others to it? Will they quietly submit to such unmerited distinctions? Will this not also lead to lawless efforts and insurrections? Rather than be sold in distant climes, to unknown masters, many, I have no doubt, would greatly prefer to indenture themselves for life, to their recent owners, and near their accustomed associations.

Mr. Speaker, I have another objection to this scheme. It is not to commence its operation within about thirty years. It is to produce no practical effect, within half a century. If it is intended to obviate impending *dangers*, what is to become of us all, if our safety be the object, in the mean time? But, what is of greater import, will it not be subject to legislative intervention during the whole time? And before a single one of these fortunate *post nati* could attain to freedom, could not any subsequent legislature repeal the statutes which we might enact, conferring on them this inchoate right? Have gentlemen reflected on the character of the discussions which would certainly be kept up here, winter after winter, on this subject, until the day of jubilee should arrive? Have they thought of the dangerous excitement which would inevitably be engendered, both among the whites and the blacks, during this dark and uncertain period? and of the thousands which would be expended in protracted sessions of the legislature—enough, perhaps, to remove all the negroes in the state? Arguments have been derived from the legislation of other states—of New York, Pennsylvania, and the New England states, in favor of the plan which I am now considering. I am not one of those, sir, who are too proud to borrow principles or institutions from other states, which are found to be good, or to profit by their experience. But we should not, upon trust, adopt a policy inapplicable to our situation. They have taught us, indeed, a valuable lesson; one which, I hope, we have learned—that something can be done. But, does it follow because they succeeded in removing slavery under peculiar circumstances, by a particular process, that we should attempt the *same mode*? What might have been attainable there, may be ruinous here, under *different circumstances*. I have no census before me of the former population of these states, at the time that those abolition laws were respectively enacted; but I hazard little in saying that there were not, in a single one of them, as many slaves at the time, as there are now *free negroes* even in Virginia. When the evil among them was small, it was no doubt easily crushed; and if the rights of the holders were crushed at the same time, it is because they were not sufficiently numerous to protect themselves—and it is the fate of minorities to be trampled on. And the name and authority of the venerable and illustrious ancestor of the gentleman who moves this proposition—the immortal Jefferson—are invoked to aid and sustain it. But with what propriety, sir? No man ever felt the evils of slavery more acutely than Mr.

Jefferson—no statesman was ever more anxious to remove them. The plan which he proposed in his writings, (but which, from the intrinsic difficulties which he no doubt felt would attend its execution, even at that day, was never specifically proposed to the government during his long and brilliant career in public life,) contained features essentially different from this. I do not understand him to recommend that the offspring of the slaves should be torn from their owners without compensation. His last letter published on the subject, according to my construction of it, is of opposite import—and he, certainly, does not recommend a submission of so important a measure to the people, in a mode which gives to different regions of the state a relative political weight in its decision, to which they are not constitutionally entitled. Again, Mr. Speaker: a plan which the powerful intellect of Mr. Jefferson might have thought possibly attainable at the time, and under the circumstances when he suggested it, might be greatly inapplicable to the altered condition of things at present. And, sir, were Mr. Jefferson now alive, I cannot for a moment believe, that he would approve, at this time, such a proposition as this. Sir, at that time, there were in all Virginia, less than 300,000 slaves, and only about 12,000 free persons of color—while now, we have, east of the Alleghany mountains alone, about 455,000 slaves, and nearly 46,000 free negroes—a state of things certainly greatly altered.

Mr. Speaker,—I understood the gentleman from Albemarle in his first address, after introducing this substitute, distinctly to say, that he himself *was not now prepared* to vote for any specific plan for the abolition of slavery, but wished the question submitted to the constituent body. I cannot, I think, well be mistaken,—for it struck me at the moment, as a remarkable declaration, and it left a deep impression on my mind. So it turns out that the gentleman has ushered into this house a measure involving the most momentous consequences that could well be conceived of, on the interests of this whole commonwealth; while he himself is not prepared at this time to vote either for that or any other plan, having the same object in view, if presented in the shape of a bill to this assembly for its final action. [Mr. Randolph here explained. I understood him to say that he had not declared that he would not vote for his resolution, but would not vote for an *act* on the subject until submitted to the people.]

Mr. Brodnax resumed. Mr. Speaker, I understood the gentleman perfectly at first. He said then, as he says now, that he was not willing to vote for a law effecting this object at this session. Then, why, Sir, I would ask, introduce any such measures before us? If we are not prepared, or sufficiently informed of the wishes of our constituents, to legislate definitively now, why agitate the state on so delicate a subject by a profitless discussion of a hypothetical scheme? The plan is not to operate *now*, if adopted, unless mischievously. But it is only to *submit* the question to the people, we are told! Why call on the people on this subject—it is they who have called on us. Do our constituents expect or require such a measure as this at our hands? Have they petitioned for this? It is true that there has been great excitement among the people throughout our state, on the subject of

our colored population, and that nearly all agree that *something* should be done. It is true that they have preferred numerous petitions to us. But do any of them ask that we should submit any plan to them! No, Sir, they pray *this assembly* to do something. They do not indicate what, with any precision, it is true; but, by a remarkable and fortuitous coincidence, very many of them have adopted the same expression—they ask us to adopt “whatever measure the wisdom of the Legislature may devise as the best.” They are not prepared to act, and they call on us to act for them. It is to “our wisdom” that the appeal is made—not that we should submit it back again to their wisdom.

Mr. Speaker, the plan of framing a law, and submitting it to the people, is certainly a plausible one. When first presented to my mind, I was somewhat taken with it; but very little reflection entirely convinced me that it was wrong in principle, and would be dangerous in practice—the precedent might be inconvenient: it would be an ingenious expedient to elude the responsibility which properly rests on our shoulders, by throwing it back on those of the people. I know it is easy to ask if we are afraid to trust the people. It is for the very protection of my people, that I will not consent to submit the validity of their rights to the decision of other people. Sir, the very idea of submitting a law to the qualified voters of the state, is subversive of the government itself. It would be a palpable violation of the spirit of that compact, which, after so much toil and trouble, was adopted as a compromise, by the late convention. Yes, sir, a compromise, by which we of the east, lost much and gained little. But, is it not obvious that it would be surrendering all at discretion to permit the qualified voters to decide great questions of interest in the state? In the graduation of political power, it is known that the numerical weight given to the people of the east, in consideration of their slave property, (and, by the-by, for the protection principally of that very property,) was greater than that given to an equal number in the west. So that the delegates here do not represent an average of equal numbers of voters. But this scheme of submission would, in effect, exactly bring upon us the principles of that celebrated *white basis*, against which we struggled so earnestly in the late convention.

But, Mr. Speaker, has not another objection to this plan occurred to you, of still more delicate and insuperable character? Suppose it submitted;—to whom will you submit it? Will you submit it to those who own the property, or to those who do not? Is it to be decided by those who are prominently—nay, almost exclusively, interested in the subject, or by those who have little or no interest in it? These, sir, are grave and important questions, and will awaken some obvious reflections. There are but two modes in which the state can acquire title to these *post nati*, or possess itself of the property of the private citizen. One is, by the consent of the owners—and the other, which is that so frequently resorted to by absolute governments—is force. If a measure of mere force is to be resorted to, to take away a part of our property without our consent, like banditti, or Carbonari, why then it is useless to consult us, or institute the solemn mockery of submitting the project of the law to the approbation of the people. But,

if our voluntary relinquishment is looked to, who is to yield the assent?—those who now own the property, or those who do not? Sir, if I wished to get your watch from you, but understood that consent must be obtained, would it not appear supremely absurd, that this consent should rest to a third person? Sir, the approbation of any such scheme by the qualified voters at the polls, could convey no assent of the real holders of the property. Sir, is it to be submitted to the people of western Virginia inclusively, whether the east shall surrender her slaves? My brethren of the west for whom I feel the proper fraternal regard, as members of the common family, will not, I am sure, regard the idea I am urging as disrespectful to them: it certainly is not so designed; and they, so far from regarding the suggestion of their having comparatively no slave property among them as an unkind imputation, will, of course, appreciate it as a compliment; for it is one of the advantages on which they pride themselves—and they possess sympathy and commiseration for those who are so unfortunate as to possess them they say. What then, sir, is the relative condition of the several great divisions of our state? Where is the slave property found? In whose hands? Were it diffused over all the state in any degree approximating to equality, there would be but little practical injustice in referring the question of its confiscation to the whole state. But, sir, in truth, the western part of the state has no pecuniary interest in this matter. The single county of Halifax alone, has as many slaves, within a fraction, as the whole trans-Alleghany country together! And we have many other counties above the falls of our great water courses, which, singly, contain nearly as many of the colored population, as that quarter of our state collectively. It contains 15,000 slaves out of about 470,000; not one out of thirty. And about 1,600 free negroes out of 47,000; bearing about the same proportion. And, sir, the fine and fertile Valley district, does not compare much better, with the two eastern divisions. And are the qualified voters who people these regions to be constituted arbiters to decide whether we shall surrender a portion of our property or not? And when they obviously have no interest in the subject; or if they do have, (and they contend that they are greatly to be benefitted by the liberation of our slaves,) it is an interest diametrically opposed to ours!

And yet, sir, the gentleman from Campbell, (Mr. Rives) has informed us, that in his opinion, these are the very people who are best qualified to decide! According to his idea, those who own no slaves are the very people to decide impartially, whether those who hold them should give them up or not! And what is still stranger, he puts it on the ground that they are perfectly *disinterested*. Yes, sir: I want your watch, and I leave it to myself, and three other men who own no watches, to say whether you shall not give up your watch to us. Sir, without feeling, much less intending to express any unkind feeling, or want of respect for those who hold these doctrines, I must pronounce the doctrines themselves unsound, dangerous, and *revolutionary*. Were we once to admit such a principle as this, every incentive to industry and enterprise would cease to exist, and there would remain no security whatever for property. Sir, though it may not be carried out in extent so far—in principle it is the same that impelled a

particular portion of the people of ancient Rome, on every new disturbance in the state, to cry out for an Agrarian law. It is the same spirit which impelled the mob through the dark and bloody scenes of the French revolution, (I of course do not allude to the recent one,) to seize on all the property they could find, and make partition of the spoil. The wildest views of the disciples of Hunt, and the ultra reformers of England, do not proceed to such extremities as this.

Mr. Speaker, while on this subject, I will call your attention, and that especially of the western delegation on this floor, to the promises and assurances held out to us of the east, soon after the commencement of the session, on more than one occasion, and by more than one member from the western section of our state, that the subject of our colored population was peculiarly an eastern one—that they would not interpose, but give us a *carte blanche* to prepare what measures we pleased—and they who have no immediate interest in the question, would then come forward and assist us in effecting it. They told us to go on and work out a plan for our own relief, which would suit ourselves. It was not from one quarter alone that these declarations emanated—but from different gentlemen, whose respectability forbade that their sincerity and good faith should be distrusted. The sounds fell upon my ear like soft, sweet music in the stillness of night. They came as the harbingers of good feeling from a whole region of country, and bespoke kindness and sympathy for us: and I trust they will fulfil this pledge in the letter and the spirit. They cannot, surely, look upon this as an eastern measure, because proposed by a member who comes from a divided county east of the Ridge, and supported by some five or six eastern gentlemen, out of the whole of its numerous delegation. If they really desire to subserve the views of the east, they will go with the great body of the east, and not the fragments which have flown off of it. And if the west really deems it courteous or just, not to interpose in this concern, will they unite in a vote to submit the question to themselves? Sir, I hope that no such submission will obtain the favorable consideration of a Virginia assembly: its effects might be disastrous. If there were no other, the country would be kept in a state of feverish excitement, and distracted uncertainty, until the result of the submission could be ascertained. In the mean time, the discussion of the question at the cross roads and at the hustings, publicly and privately, would soon give publicity to the existence of such a question among the negroes themselves, and the consequences could not, in the nature of things, be other than deleterious. And at last, when the result of the submission comes, and that, or any measure growing out of it, shall go the length of depriving the people who own this property, of any portion of it, without their own consent, they will not submit to it. Sir, I assure you, coolly and dispassionately, as my sincere conviction, that the people who own this property *will not submit* to such a law—and that *they ought not*. They would hurl from their stations their unfaithful representatives who had contributed to bring such injustice upon them—and if their successors could effect no repeal of the obnoxious provisions, the people would burst into atoms the bond which unites our state as one political community—or even proceed to the *ultima ratio*, if nothing else would

succeed—a result which I pray heaven in its mercy, to avert from our land. If the people were to surrender to one invasion of a plain right, other exactions might soon follow. To give up a little, would only hold out an invitation to demand the remainder.

Mr. Speaker, in the course of this discussion many things have been said on both sides, the expression of which I sincerely regretted. Not because they had their origin in unkind or improper feelings, but because, if they go forth literally to the world, they may exert an unfortunate influence, and lead to misconceptions abroad, of the dispositions and motives of those who uttered them. I beg leave to advert to a few of those, before I proceed to exhibit the statement I have alluded to, of the measures I consider called for by existing emergencies. My warm-hearted and worthy friend from Rockbridge, (Mr. Moore,) in the ardor of debate, allowed himself to allude to the late glorious struggle of the Poles for the freedom of their country,—and the course of the Parisians in their celebrated three days revolution, in glowing terms of approbation, and compared the cause in which they were engaged with that which incited to scenes of blood and horror the actors in the late Southampton massacre. I know, sir, that the gentleman from Rockbridge is one of the last who would willingly stand as an ally by the side of such incendiaries as Garrison and Walker—and yet he has used the very idea, and nearly in the very words, which is so conspicuously emblazoned to our slaves by those execrable pamphleteers. Surely these are not the *illuminati*, to whom the gentleman would look for that “light” which, he says, “has come into the world,” on this delicate subject. My friend from Brunswick, (Mr. Gholson,) yesterday acted on an idea, which, I feared, might lead to a misapprehension of the grounds on which we (including himself,) rest the defence of the rights we assert. In an eloquent dissertation on the importance of securing the right of private property, he exclaimed—

“Who takes that from me on which life subsists,
“Takes life itself!”

A sentiment which he ascribed to “the great Poet of Nature.” But my friend overlooked the fact, that Shakspeare has put this expression in the mouth of the griping, cold-hearted, seared-feeling, sordid Shylock. I was gratified to observe, that the gentleman subsequently essayed a warmer and more generous strain, and assumed a ground which I regard as much more important. Sir, it is not so much the *value* of the property you would tear from us, weighty as is that consideration, as the *principle* involved, which we regard. Our people are not sordid in their feelings, or calculating in their habits, when they do not apprehend wrong. It has often occurred, in the revolutions of the commercial world, and the fluctuations in price, to which our staple agricultural productions are exposed, that a sudden reduction in the value of the proceeds of the labor of these very slaves—and those proceeds constitute the value of the slaves themselves—has deprived their owners of half their usual income. But who has heard a complaint from them on that account? Generous and disinterested, they had rather give you half they possess, than that the smallest portion should be wrested from them by lawless violence, or reckless le-

gislation. "Millions for defence, but not a cent for tribute," was a noble sentiment—one which did honor to the patriot who uttered it, and to the country which claimed him. It is no otherwise appropriate to this subject, than as a striking expression of the paramount superiority of importance, of principle, over mere money.

I heard also, Mr. Speaker, with regret, unfavorable opinions of our brethren of other states, expressed perhaps with too much force, and denunciations indulged in entirely too general, against the "yankees;" for instance, in consequence of the shameless conduct of some few miscreants among them, who have endeavored, by incendiary publications, to excite our slaves to insurrection. Shall we talk of war with our sister states, because a Garrison or a Walker may disgrace their soil? I am sure gentlemen intended to confine their sweeping denunciations to the infamous individuals alone who are guilty, and who cannot be viewed without indignation and horror. And I have only adverted to them, lest they might give rise to misapprehensions abroad. Great injustice might be done in visiting censure on whole communities, for the acts of a few misguided fanatics, or vicious incendiaries who may happen to be among them, and over whose conduct neither government nor laws can exert any control. We have here in old Virginia, many, whom all of us would regret to see erected into standards by which Virginia character abroad was to be graduated and determined,—many, for whose conduct it would be unjust in the extreme to hold our people collectively responsible. Every community will have in its bosom some unworthy and disreputable members. Even in that little band of disciples, which our Saviour himself, while on earth, selected to follow him, a Judas Iscariot was found. I have been gratified to learn that the intelligent and the virtuous in the northern states, as cordially deprecate and condemn the excesses of these unprincipled incendiaries—these moral Carbonari among them, as we can do,—and it would be as ungenerous as unjust to breathe out an indiscriminate anathema against all. For several years, I have remarked with interest and attention, on the state of feeling existing between different sections of our common country. Strong and unfounded prejudices certainly have existed on both sides, between our northern brethren and us. But I am happy to have perceived that they are gradually subsiding, as we acquire a more intimate knowledge of each other; and it is certainly the duty of the virtuous and the wise, on both sides, to endeavour to repress those which remain, rather than to foment and inflame them. We may indulge in that "national vanity" of which my friend spoke—we may be as patriotic as we please, and ardent in our admiration of our own state, its institutions, its manners, and its people. But while we love ourselves more, we need not appreciate our more remote brethren less. True charity has been beautifully assimilated to the appearances which present themselves when a stone has fallen into the bosom of some smooth and tranquil lake. Of those numerous concentric circles which immediately rise into waves, those nearest the centre are certainly the highest and strongest; but these are followed by ripple after ripple, in more extended and successive undulations, until the impression is diffused over the whole expanse of the waters. For myself, I delight to

see these favorable dispositions cultivated. Our northern brethren no longer, as was the case some years ago, look on every Virginia slave-holder, as identified with a negro driver in the Mauritius, who forces them to labor night and day, with scarcely an intermission, and keeps them up with a cart whip : that they are fed on cotton-seed, or for the slightest offence cruelly bastinandoed, while confined naked on their backs, with their eyes exposed to a scorching sun, as the Romans formerly punished their desperate culprits. They have found out, that all these are mistakes; and that public sentiment in Virginia, will not tolerate the cruel or improper treatment of slaves : that in point of fact, their condition is superior to that of the peasantry of any other country, in possessing the ordinary comforts of life. I regard them myself, as exempt from many of the evils incident to laboring classes in other countries—They are well fed and well clothed—Famine, which reaches others, is never allowed, even from policy, to affect them. They have no care on their minds to provide a subsistence, and are, when they have good masters, I believe in a happy condition. And in this light is the subject now generally regarded by strangers of intelligence, who never condescend to take their opinions from the miserable effusions of such editors as have been alluded to. A great many of our prejudices against them, on the other hand, have been discovered to be unfounded. We have learnt that it is not fair to judge of a whole people from the specimens exhibited of travelling pedlars, or needy adventurers. And I am happy in expressing it as my opinion, that a better state of feeling between us is growing up continually, and that it ought to be cherished.

Mr. Speaker, in reviewing what has fallen from those who have preceded me in this debate, I cannot omit to notice an idea of the gentleman from Campbell, (Mr. Rives;) for, I cannot help regarding its tendency as unfortunate. In taking a prophetic vision of the future destinies of Old Virginia, he permitted his imagination to be warmed, until it became disturbed by a phantom of most horrible import—when he looked forward to the day when this hall should be occupied by a negro legislature ! Sir, did the gentleman allow his heated fancy to roam so wildly into the regions of romance, as really to suppose, that such an event was within the range—not of probabilities—but even of possibilities ? I felt, sir, when I heard the suggestion, an involuntary shudder; and even now, I can with difficulty divest myself of the dreadful impression it made on my mind at the moment. Mr. Speaker, I looked at you when this heart-chilling prophecy was pronounced,—I then looked on this assembly of “reverend, grave, and potent seigniors,” as they were yesterday termed, in that round of compliments which they received.—I looked at the unusual concourse of respectable and intelligent visitors who crowded your gallery and lobby ;—And last, but not least, sir, I looked on that fair portion of our auditory, whose presence here attests their deep interest in these proceedings—on those fair ones, who are ever nearest to our feelings, and dearest to our hearts, when scenes of danger are talked of. Sir, with what feelings did *you* reflect on the spectacle, when you imagined to yourself a knotty-pated, sable African, usurping the chair, which you now occupy, and presiding over the deliberations of a negro assembly ? Sir, I for-

bear to carry out the sombre picture. Better would it have been--far less grating to our feelings, or dreadful to our imaginations--for the gentleman, while wrapt in the seraphic spirit, to have looked still further through the vista of future time, until in the language in which one of the ancient prophets describes a desolated city--“the grass shall be seen growing in the streets, and the foxes peeping from the holes.” Better, sir, that he should have looked even still farther--to the time when the very existence of the city of Richmond, shall have become matter of history, with that of Balbec, Persepolis, and Palmyra.—When travellers shall visit the remaining ruins on these romantic hills, and another Volney shall be seated on some broken fragment of one of those beautiful pillars, which now adorn and support this splendid structure, amidst the decaying rubbish of this capitol, indulging ingenuous speculations as to whether the temple of some heathen God—or the state house of some civilized race, had once occupied the spot—or, if history had not yet become quite so dim—inditing in his journal, that he was in a land where there existed some fabled accounts—some obscure traditions of one *Washington*, who was said once to have lived in this then desolated wilderness, to have been “first in peace, first in war, and first in the hearts” of this ancient people—to have “filled the measure of his country’s glory,” and to have “read his history in a nation’s eyes.” Perhaps, sir, in the portrait, you could see some curious Antiquary, who had traversed the Atlantic to hunt up amidst those ruins, some small piece of the marble which now forms a part of that noble statue in your vestibule, raised to the memory of Virginia’s proudest son, and preserving it as a precious relic with all the consecrated solicitude and devotions of catholic superstition. Sir, I had rather, in fine, that the gentleman had extended his wrapt vision even to that remotest of all times—when

“This great globe itself,
“Yea, all which it inherit shall dissolve.
“And like the baseless fabric of a vision,
“Leave not a wreck behind.”

Sir, it was with unqualified astonishment, that I heard any supposition advanced of the *possibility* of a successful insurrection by our colored population. It is true, there has been great excitement, and much unpleasant apprehension of danger. I am happy to have learned that all this is to a considerable extent subsiding. It demonstrates certainly, however, the propriety, the necessity of our adopting some measure to re-assure public confidence; and prevent as far as practicable the recurrence of scenes similar to those so often alluded to. I certainly am not without *my* fears. But not the craven fear I trust; but that which dictates the expediency of looking guardedly at every thing before us, so as to be best prepared to meet, or to ward off, approaching danger. I do believe, and such must be the deliberate judgment of every reflecting man, that unless something is done in time to obviate it, the day must arrive when scenes of inconceivable horror must inevitably occur, and one of these two races of human beings, will have their throats cut by the other. It is impossible that things can always continue to flow on in their present current, without some radical change in our policy towards the African caste. This

consequence must result, unless something can be done to remove or mitigate the tremendous evil.

But when allusions have heretofore been made to this horrible catastrophe, did it enter into the imagination of any body, that *the whites* were to be the ultimate victims?—that any successful general conspiracy ever could occur? No, sir; I beg you to understand, that however dreadful either alternative would be, however anxious, however painfully solicitous we may be, to provide some efficient measure of prevention, it is not founded on the supposition, by a human being in the region more immediately concerned, that our negroes are ever to exchange conditions with us, or make laws for a subjugated province. The real extent of the danger—and God knows that is bad enough!—is, that in insulated neighborhoods, a few misguided fanatics, like Nat Turner—or reckless infatuated desperadoes, like his followers, in total ignorance of the extent of such an enterprise, or of the means necessary to accomplish it, may, in moments of sudden excitement, make desperate attempts, and commence partial excesses of pillage and massacre. Much mischief—(yes, sir, as important to the wretched individuals assailed, as if all the world was involved,)—much injury might be inflicted, before the insurgents could be met with and arrested. But, so far from their overwhelming the whites, conquering the country, overturning our political dynasty, and usurping the seats of legislation, *the very act of their embodying, would be the immediate signal for their annihilation.* Sir, I assure you, that whatever little of military information I may possess, confirms and corroborates this obvious view of the subject. The only difficulty consists in *finding them*—The danger to be apprehended is entirely of a temporary character, and while they advance unseen and unopposed. The idea of a military force invading and conquering any country, without uniting in a mass, or by avoiding the opposing force of the invaded, would be ridiculous. In truth, there was never a single moment, from the commencement, to the termination, of this celebrated Southampton insurrection, in which ten resolute, well armed men, could not easily have put the whole down. With the relative moral, intellectual and scientific advantages which we possess, the numerical superiority of our slaves would have to become at least twenty to one before any probable prospect could exist, of a successful general rebellion. Should the disproportion ever become *very great*, the God of Heaven who governs the universe, only knows what might happen. The only serious apprehension is, that now and then—perhaps after intervals of many years—*partial* attempts at local insurrection may be made, much mischief may be done in small districts, until, I repeat it, one or the other party will be exterminated. Another attempt soon after the recent one, would, in my judgment, lead the way to an indiscriminate slaughter of all the blacks, whether concerned in it or not. I assure you, sir, that at the close of that which has passed, and when the public mind was excited almost to frenzy, by seeing the mangled corpses of helpless females and unoffending infants devoured by dogs and vultures before interment could be effected, it was with the greatest difficulty, and at the hazard of personal popularity and esteem, that the coolest and most judicious among us could exert an influence sufficient to restrain an indiscrimi-

nate slaughter of the blacks who were suspected. Sir, a few more such efforts—and the whole race will be swept from among us. Who would willingly behold such a spectacle? But, sir, does the belief that it will be the *blacks* themselves, and not the *whites* who must eventually fall in such a struggle, constitute any reason for our remitting all our exertions to avert it?—Surely not.

Sir, while I cannot concur in the bold experiment of the gentleman from Albemarle, and am not willing to take by lawless force, or by unconstitutional legis' tion, the property of a single citizen, I do most heartily agree with him in the conviction, that prudence and policy—that every consideration held dear and valuable to man, require that something should be done to stay this onward evil in its course. I am sensible, sir, that the house must already be fatigued, notwithstanding its courteous and gratifying attention to me; and I will immediately proceed to a consideration of the facts and statistics, from which *I* infer not only the *necessity* of doing something, but the *practicability* of doing it, and that without the violation of a single principle, which at the outset, I assumed as axiomatic.

Mr. Speaker: I have to invite the attention of the house to some statistical views of this subject, which I deem very important. I am not insensible to the difficulty of rendering any tabular statements—heavy statistical documents—interesting to an auditory. And I do not intend to weary you by reading over, in unmeaning succession, census returns, or other collections of similar materials, which are accessible to all of us, and which all of us have often examined. We may have perused repeatedly, however, in a general manner, such documents as those from which I derive the information I wish to exhibit, without having our attentions directed to particular results, bearing on given questions, not pre-supposed. My object in recurring to these tables, is to point out to you some *practical views*, bearing immediately on this question, to which, in previous examinations, your attentions may not have been drawn. The time, sir, consumed in looking over them, may not be altogether unprofitably employed; for the results which they will be found to exhibit, are really astounding and appalling—and such as will startle and dismay every true patriot. They will shew what consequences are likely to occur, if we neglect to adopt, in time, *some efficient measure* to stay the alarming progressive increase of our colored population. The statistics I design to present you, will, I think, shew not only that something *must* be done, but, sir, I assure you with delight, that they do more—they demonstrate that something *can* be done, and they shew you *how* you may do it. They indicate, if I am not over sanguine, the practicability of a plan of preventing the future accumulation of this population, while the whites shall be doubling their numbers, on principles beneficial to the owners of the property, and happy for the country. Let us first ascertain the *necessity* of doing any thing, before we look around for the *means*.

The state of Virginia contains by the last census, less than one-fifteenth part of the whole *white* population of the United States;

It contains *more* than one-seventh of the *free negroes*;

And it possesses between a fourth and a fifth, of all the *slaves* in the union.

Virginia has a greater number of slaves than any other state in the union—and more, than Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee, all put together; and more than four times as many as either of them. South Carolina and Louisiana are the only states in which the slaves are more numerous than the white population; and Virginia has more slaves, without estimating her great and unfortunate disproportion of free persons of color, than both these states put together. Nay, sir, one half of the state—that which lies on the east of the Blue Ridge of mountains, itself contains nearly as many. The *whole* of Virginia taken collectively, it is true, contains a numerical preponderance—one, however, becoming less and less every day—of *white* over *black* population; but when we regard the great divisions of the state, how will it stand then?

Virginia contains 694,439 whites, 469,724 slaves, and 47,103 free persons of color.

But how are these aggregates distributed? In the eastern half of Virginia—that which lies between the Blue Ridge and the Atlantic Ocean, there are 375,935 whites—416,350 slaves, and 40,763 free negroes.

And while the western half of the state contains 318,504 white inhabitants, the trans-Alleghany section of the state contains only about 15,000 slaves and 1,600 free negroes—and the Valley district, between the Alleghany and the Blue Ridge, but 38,448 slaves and 4,685 free negroes. So that an enormous numerical disproportion of the black population of the state, rests on eastern Virginia. In truth, as I had occasion before to intimate, for a different purpose, many of our *counties* in the east contain nearly as many slaves and free negroes, as the entire extreme western division of the state. Now, sir, for all practical purposes, it is proper to confine our estimates exclusively to that portion of Virginia which lies below her range of mountains. Whether protection to us, or injury to themselves be regarded, the western region, though a portion of the same state, can have no more connection with this aspect of the question, than if it did not constitute a part of the state. And it would be just as discreet to look to Maryland, North Carolina, or to Ohio itself, where there are no slaves, and derive an aggregate proportion of the different populations from all these collectively, as to enumerate in the estimate, that portion of our own state, which is equally removed from the reach of danger from our slaves, or the possibility of aiding us, if necessity should ever require it.

The annual increase of the white population of Virginia, taken from a long series of preceding years, is about one and a half per cent., while that of the free negroes has been, in the same period, two and three-fourths per cent. The *actual* increase of our slaves has only been one per cent. This, however, has obviously resulted from the regular removal of a large number of the latter, by sales to the southern states—a drain which, from present indications, is about to be greatly diminished, or entirely cut off from us by legislative interdictions on their part. The disproportion of increase, too, it will be remarked, (for these averages of increase are taken from the whole state together,) is much greater in eastern Virginia than in its western division. The average of increase, of all classes of population, in the

United States generally, exceeds three per cent. Let us take a retrospect now, sir, of our condition some years ago; and then extend our view to what it must inevitably become, should no measures in the mean time be adopted to obviate it, within a few years hence.

Forty years ago, there were, in eastern Virginia, above 25,000 more white people than slaves and free persons of color together.—Now, there are above 81,000 more blacks than whites—exhibiting within that short period, notwithstanding, too, the constant drain of our slaves during the whole time, an actual gain of the African race upon us, in this half of the state, of upwards of 106,000!!

And what, sir, on the same principles of calculation, is to be our relative condition forty years hence, should no successful effort be made to arrest the present course of things?

The ratio of increase of whites, it will be seen from the regular census during the last forty years, has been fifty-one per cent., while that of the blacks, bond and free together, has been one hundred and eighty-six per cent!! A comparison of the returns from the year 1790 to this time, will indicate this result, with mathematical precision and certainty, and it is a *striking* fact. Now, add to the present excess of black population, 81,078, only the same increase for the next forty years, which has occurred during the preceding forty years, to wit, 106,176, and you have 187,254. And, discarding from consideration, that this progressive increase will be in a geometrical, and not an arithmetical ratio, but making only a slight allowance for the effect to be produced by the occlusion of the western markets, and you arrive at the result, that in the eastern section of Virginia alone, there will, within the next forty years, be in round numbers, 200,000 more black inhabitants than white ones. The commonwealth of Virginia has at this time, within a small fraction, four times as many free negroes, as she had forty years ago—and nearly twice as many slaves---while she has only about fifty per cent., on her then white population.

Forty years ago, there were in the whole United States, but 697,697 slaves; while now there are in Virginia alone, 469,724, besides her free negroes.

Sir, these results are astounding. They are not the vagaries of a heated imagination---but conclusions inferable from plain arithmetical calculations, founded on established data, and in which, unfortunately, there can be no mistake. If the disproportions I have pointed out, continue to advance, as all former experience shows they must do, unless the current is arrested---what, I repeat it, will be the condition of our state forty years hence? Mr. Speaker, the gloomy forebodings to which these reflections point, are not likely to be realized in your day or mine. *We shall*, no doubt, have been swept from the scene of action. But, sir, it is the duty of good parents to look to the welfare of their children. The state ought to legislate, not for ourselves alone, but for posterity. Any course of events tending to evil, should, if possible, be arrested in time. If all that is desirable cannot be accomplished at once, let us at least do what we can. It is the duty---the imperative duty---of every wise and good man in the state, however humble, to exert his invention to the utmost, and contribute his mite, however small it may be, towards the consummation of some expedi-

ent, to avert the fearful consequences which are impending over us. "Rome," sir, "was not built in a day." And let us not undertake it, with the short-lived fervor of enthusiasts, who would expect to see it rise at our bidding, with magic celerity, and who would abandon the effort on encountering the first difficulty. Let us rather advance guardedly with our means; and, like children beginning to walk, venture short steps at first, until our strength increases. Laborious and patient perseverance is all-essential to success.

Let us look again at our statistics, and see if they will admit of no expedient, calculated to counteract the fearful conclusion to which they seem otherwise unerringly to point.

The annual increase of the slaves in Virginia, may be assumed at an average of 4,500

And that of our free colored population at 1,100

Making an annual aggregate increase of both, of 5,600

There are no fair principles of calculation which can be applied to our previous history, or to the actual returns of our census, whether including short or more extending periods of time, which will not, I think, indicate a ratio of increase, of the whole African race in Virginia, of less than 6,000 a year. By a removal then of 6,000 annually from the territory of Virginia, the capital stock would at the least be kept stationary, if not reduced—while our white population would be increasing at an accelerated pace. The whole population of the United States, it has been long ascertained, duplicates in every period of 25 years. These periods of duplication, I know, occasionally vary, and will become successively longer and longer protracted. The history, in this respect, of all newly-settled countries in the world, has been the same. The tide of increasing population, rushes in more rapidly at first, and as the opened space becomes gradually filled, it flows in more smoothly and slowly. There has as yet, however, been scarcely a perceptible abatement in the increase of the population of America. But say that the white population of Virginia would not double itself until the expiration of 30 years, or 35 years, or even 40 years, sir, if you please. What, then, would be the situation of Virginia at the end of these forty years, in comparison with what I have shewn it will be, if nothing to prevent it is accomplished? a white population more than double that of the blacks, having attained an advance, which, by the augmentation of the capital stock, would forever put any increase of the blacks below their reach, and dissipate our danger, dispel our apprehensions, and greatly diminish most of the embarrassments and evils attendant on slavery. This, sir, would be the result, even if the process of amotion was then stopped forever. But why should it be? Let us look at this calculation in another light.

By the annual deportation of 6,000 a year from our shores,—commencing, of course, with our free persons of color—a policy which every consideration of prudence, humanity, and interest would unite in recommending—within ten years there would not be left one single free negro in Virginia. Sir, in making this computation, I have included in the calculation, the greatest rate of increase of those who would remain among us, while this gradual reduction would be going

on ; and I have entirely excluded from consideration, the great advantages in hastening the time when all would be transported, which would result from adopting the policy—as any law for that object would certainly provide—of selecting, in the first instance, particular ages and descriptions of these people, who would be more likely to increase than those who were suffered to remain among us. Those, for instance, of both sexes, who are just attaining maturity, could be deported, before families had commenced springing up around them. And those who had passed a particular age, need not be removed at all, except as a favor in particular instances where they desired it, in order to follow relatives or connexions, and had not the means of removing themselves. Nor have I, sir, made any allowance whatever, for the great numbers who, no doubt, in the mean time, and especially if a law for their compulsory deportation shall be enacted, will voluntarily, and on their own means, go off to other parts of the world.—Sir, that select committee to whom this whole subject has been referred, are especially charged with the duty of revising all our laws on the subject of our colored population. Regulations of police, much more rigorous than any heretofore existing towards our free negroes, and which will materially abridge their present privileges, are imperiously called for by existing circumstances, and will, no doubt, be adopted. Recent events, without any change in the laws, have already rendered their abode among us much less comfortable and desirable to them, than formerly. These causes will, no doubt, greatly add to the number of voluntary removals. Nor have I, in estimating the advances of white population, adverted to the obvious consideration, that the vacuum produced by the withdrawal of portions of our colored population, would soon be filled again by emigrants of our own color, from other quarters of the world. In ten years then, under the most disadvantageous alternatives of calculation, at 6,000 a year, all the free negroes in Virginia would be removed ; and in doing that, the effect would also be produced of keeping down to a stationary point, if not reducing it, the aggregate number of *both* classes of our black population. Before I proceed to inquire into what ulterior measures it may be wise for us to adopt, *after* this removal of the free persons of color shall have been effected, it will be well for us to examine into the ways and means at our command, to remove this 6,000 a year. However desirable, it would be useless to attempt it, if we have not the means to effect it. We should not proceed like the foolish man in the scriptures, who undertook to build a house without counting the cost. This is the *first* consideration :—What sum, then, will it take to transport this number annually, to the western coast of Africa, which I shall assume, for the present, as the point of deportation ? I recollect to have seen a speech, delivered by Mr. Clay, in 1826, before the American Colonization Society, in which he stated, that from numerous actual experiments previously made, it had been ascertained, that emigrants from the United States could be transported to Liberia, for \$20 a head. Since then, I have seen different annual reports from that society ; and, in the last which I have read, I think the cost of transportation is stated at \$23 each. It is well known that the Colonization Society has had to encounter every

disadvantage calculated to increase its expenditures. The enterprise has been in a state of infancy—immatured in its action—and with very limited resources. It has had to charter vessels; these would remain, sometimes, in port a long time on expenses, before a full cargo of emigrants could be collected. Sometimes a cargo incomplete in numbers, had to be shipped; and the freight per head, of course, would be higher. Were the state to undertake the transportation of a class of its inhabitants, on a more extended scale, the expenses would, no doubt, be diminished, by many increased facilities. Such is, certainly, the ordinary effect of enlarging operations. I have heard the idea suggested, of the state purchasing ships, and keeping them regularly employed in effecting this transportation. This, and other judicious regulations, would, no doubt, greatly diminish the cost on each individual removal. And should the plan be extended, by authorizing return cargoes of the various productions of that coast, (most of which are valuable in our markets) by the vessels so employed, a still greater reduction in the cost of transportation, might probably be effected. But let the calculation assume its most disadvantageous form, and say that \$23 33 cents per head, is to be considered the necessary expense of removing these people to Africa. I take it for granted, that no person has conceived the idea, that those among them who possess no property—who have neither the means of transporting themselves, nor of providing the necessary support immediately on their arrival, are to be shipped off by the state, and cast on the shores of a distant region of the earth, to be devoured by wild beasts—or what would be infinitely worse, to perish by famine. No, sir: I presume that some temporary supply to emigrants of this description, to support them immediately on their arrival, and until they could be able to make a support for themselves, is what would be required by humanity, approved by every wise legislator, and is expected by the country. What additional expenditure would this temporary provision involve? By recurring to the same source of information, I find that the Colonization Society has estimated the additional expense for this purpose, at \$10 per head. Indeed, I think that offers have been made for \$33 33 cents each, to take any number of emigrants, transport them to Liberia, and assume the responsibility of all their subsequent necessary support. I have no doubt the sum of \$10 would be ample. This would be no first attempt to settle a wild and unknown country, where the adventurers would have to wander in the forest, and subsist on acorns until they could fell and reclaim it. That society, to which I have so often alluded, has paved the way for us. The country is an extremely fertile one—abounding in natural resources—and with a climate which, while it is adapted to the African constitution, needs no recurrence of particular seasons for raising crops. No, sir: the spring, the summer, the autumn, and the winter, are all, I understand, for agricultural purposes, the same. Whenever the ground is sufficiently moistened by rain, you may plant. In a few weeks the crops begin to ripen. One man may be seeding and another reaping his crop at the same time, in co-terminous fields. The means of subsistence are, consequently, easily and speedily obtained: and I repeat, then, that \$10 would be an ample provision for temporary support. The aggregate

sum per head—\$33 33 cents, multiplied by 6,000, the number proposed to be annually deported, gives you the sum of \$200,000, as that which will be required to effect this object.

As for the shipping required to transport that number, I will only remark, that allowing two persons to every five tons—the usual computation—and which, I believe, is the proportion limited by the laws of congress, and estimating an average of two voyages a year to each vessel, the tonnage required would be 7,500, which is less, sir, than the hundred and seventieth part of the mercantile marine of the United States—excluding from view, the whole of our navy. Let us not hear, then, any more about the impossibility of removing such a number. Sir, you know that most of the civilized powers of Europe, have long combined to suppress the slave trade. Expensive armaments are constantly cruising, to intercept and prevent it. Those engaged in it, are denounced as pirates. And yet, sir, notwithstanding all these precautions, there are annually brought from the coast of Africa, and sold into slavery, an average of 100,000 natives. There were brought, as I learn from unquestionable authority, not long since, 25,000 into the island of Cuba alone, in one year, notwithstanding her coast is habitually begirt with the cruising vessels of different nations. And if all this can be effected against so many risks and hazards, and in violation of the laws of God and man, shall it be said that the whole state of Virginia cannot transport 6,000 to Africa in a year?

And will the expense involved—\$200,000—be considered as presenting an insuperable obstacle? I hope no person will be found disposed so to regard it. Suppose the state shall have to rely in attaining this great and important object, on her own resources exclusively—that she is to derive no aid whatever from the general government, and that she is not to resort to the alternative of throwing on posterity, by a system of loans, part of the charge of removing what would be a horrible burden on them—that she may have to raise the amount in the most oppressive shape—by direct taxation to the whole amount, what is the sum required, to the object to be attained by it? \$200,000 on the great state of Virginia, is less than 30 cents a head on her white inhabitants. And who would refuse to pay that? Abstinence from two or three glasses of toddy at the court house, would pay it in one day. What addition would it make to our present burdens? The revenue paid to the state, at present, is nearly half a million of dollars. The county levies—the poor rates—and other occasional public dues, amount to about the same sum. So that the people of the state now, have to raise a million of dollars for public purposes annually, besides the income of the Literary Fund, and that for internal improvement. The proposed amount, would only increase the burden 20 per cent. But I do not apprehend that there would be the least necessity for deriving the whole amount immediately from taxation, as fast as it is wanting. If there ever was an object for which it would be good policy for one generation to anticipate the resources of the next, and bequeath to it part of the cost along with the benefit, this is certainly the object. But I shall not urge that matter at present, because it is not necessary.

I have supposed it not only probable, but approaching certainty,

that we might obtain considerable resources from the federal government, to which we are *entitled*, on every consideration of equal justice, and which we might consistently receive, without the slightest violation of those strict state right principles which distinguish our Virginia political school, and of which I profess myself a disciple. Of the public lands held by the general government, a large portion, it will be recollect, was ceded by Virginia—a portion too, which was exceedingly valuable. We have never received any valuable return from them. The sales of the public lands usually produce an average avail of \$3,000,000. I think the last prospective estimate of the secretary of the treasury, rated it at that amount. The proportion of this, to which Virginia would be entitled, according to the rateable principles which have been recognized, would be about \$275,000 a year. Then there is our fair proportion of the surplus, which remains in the federal treasury, of the ordinary revenue. This would be a far greater sum. I would not consent that the present tariff should be continued on us, even if we could derive this benefit from it—but if we are to be burdened, shall we bear all the evil, and get no part of the good in return? This last accession to our resources, could not, according to my construction of the powers of the general government, be appropriated to the desired object, without an amendment of the constitution. No amendment would, I apprehend, be necessary to authorise the disposition I have alluded to, of the proceeds of the public lands. The power of congress over these lands and their avails, from provisions in the acts of cession, and otherwise, have been supposed, by some of our most correct statesmen, to stand on entirely different ground from the revenue derived from imposts.—Congress has frequently acted, it would seem, on that understanding. But it is unnecessary to discuss that question. An amendment of the constitution could as well be solicited to embrace that source of revenue as the other; and from recent information, on which I place implicit reliance, I think congress at this time has every disposition to aid us on this subject, or accede to any necessary amendment of the constitution for the purpose, that we could desire. Indeed, sir, I have seen letters from *several* distinguished members of that body lately, which express the confident belief that such an application would readily prevail. I should not, of course, consent that any funds from the general government should be appropriated within our state to the purpose of removing our free persons of color, or purchasing and deporting any portion of our slaves, except on the condition, that the object was to be effected exclusively under the control of the state authorities—under regulations of its enactment—and by agents of its appointment. With these safeguards, I can perceive no objection. Mr. King, of New York, introduced, it will be recollect, a few years ago, in the Senate of the United States, resolutions for appropriating the proceeds of the public lands to these purposes. The movement was denounced through all the southern states as an alarming indication of the disposition of northern politicians to interfere with the relation between master and slave, and the resolution and its mover held up to vindictive reprobation. But the event has passed by, long enough for us to examine his project more coolly, and it bears intrin-

sic evidence of disinterestedness and patriotism. It did not propose the compulsory abolition of slavery in a single instance—but its gradual reduction, by applying these particular funds to the purchase and removal of such slaves only, as their owners might wish to sell. I confess I have ever believed that had the same proposition proceeded from a southern statesman, it would have been hailed with applause through all the slave-holding states. It was calculated surely to have increased the value of our slaves, by throwing into the market an additional fund for their purchase, and the benefit of the operation would obviously have been, primarily and almost exclusively on us; while the only benefit which could have resulted to the north, from the surrender of a fund in which they possessed a common interest, would have been the gratification of seeing the gradual extinction of an evil, which, though it did not immediately affect them, they had contributed originally to introduce—and the higher gratification of witnessing an amelioration in the condition of the United States as an whole. Whatever political heresies Rufus King may have committed, I, for one, regard this as a redeeming act in his life. Should no other member do so, it is my intention at a proper time to offer resolutions instructing our senators, and requesting our representatives in congress to propose the amendment to the constitution which may be necessary to authorise this disbursement of the federal funds.

For the transportation of our free negroes alone, I have endeavored to shew our state resources are amply sufficient. Let us, then, commence in effecting that, about which most of us are agreed—and which is all that could, for the present, be effected, whatever may be the ulterior object of any—the removal of the free persons of color. When this shall have been completed—if in its process it shall have demonstrated the practicability of this plan of gradual deportation—and if the means shall by that time be within our control with which to effect it, as I hope I have shewn was at least probable, what is to prevent our going on with the system, by the removal, annually, of as many as 6,000 of those who now are slaves? We shall have the means, I trust, of purchasing this number at fair prices. But, it is my decided belief, that this will not become necessary—or, at any rate, beyond a limited extent. There are numbers of slave-holders at this very time in Virginia—I do not speak from vague conjecture, but from what I know from the best information—and this number would continue to increase—who would voluntarily surrender their slaves, if the state would provide the means of colonizing them elsewhere. And there would be again another class—I have already heard of many—who, while they could not afford to sacrifice the entire value of their slaves, would cheerfully compromise with the state for half their value. And if, in these various modes, the state could acquire—instead of 6,000 a year—10,000 a year, and it should then be deemed desirable to accomplish such an end, it will be seen by a simple calculation, allowing for all the intervening increase, that in less than 80 years there would not be left one single slave or free negro in all Virginia.

But, Mr. Speaker, many, at first sight, are appalled at what they consider the magnitude of such an undertaking. There are some persons of sanguine temperament---and, perhaps, I may be one---who re-

gard few things as impracticable or unattainable, which are sought with determined, but cool and patient perseverance; while there are others who either despair without an effort, or are put down by the first obstacle they encounter. They can see difficulties and objections to every thing that requires exertion. The people, sir, have called upon us---and they expect us to do something. Shall we fold our arms and say to them, "the effort is too great, we have not the means nor the power, and we can do nothing. Something might have been done perhaps some years ago, but it is now too late, and there is nothing left to us but to sit down in despair?" "For a nation to be free, it is sufficient that she *wills* it," was the memorable remark of one of those patriots whose writings eminently contributed to our glorious revolution. And the same success is equally sure to follow the determined efforts of individuals, societies, or nations. In the biography of distinguished individuals, many of whom have risen from the humblest and most unpromising condition, what have we not seen effected by a high degree of moral firmness, and energy, and decision of character? A young man, especially in our happy country, where so auspicious a field for the prosperous efforts of all is presented, may become almost any thing which he determines to become. Let him but proportion his exertions to the end to be attained, and he will attain it. When he has reached one object of ambition which he had pointed out to himself, let him but make another mark on the wall, still higher up, and in due time, with patient perseverance, he will rise to that also. It is not so much inequalities in genius or imagination which have distinguished men, as it is difference in energy of character--firm decision of purpose--and stability of judgment to point out what objects are desirable, and to be pursued "with an eye that never winks, and a wing that never tires." All this is more emphatically true of states and nations. To attempt to show how little mere physical strength has to do with the elevation or depression of nations---with their power, prosperity or influence---by what means states, comparatively small in number, or wealth, have at different periods wielded the destinies of the world---would be a disquisition better adapted to a college society, than a Virginia legislature. Here I may assume, what would there have to be demonstrated. And my maxim is, that there is no desirable political object, which was ever yet attained, but which the people of this country can attain---if they determine they will attain it. Resolute determination, and unwavering perseverance, are all that are essential. With these---the road before us---which our imaginations had depicted as filled with impassable obstructions, will be found smooth and easy as we advance. The mountains in our way, will diminish in size as we approach, and ultimately disappear. I will never believe then, that Virginia is really unable to relieve herself of her difficulties.

But it would be exceedingly indiscreet to attempt too much at first; it might defeat every thing. Our exertions, I repeat it, should be limited at present to the removal of free negroes. The importance of effecting this, must be obvious to the slightest reflection. It would be beneficial to themselves--beneficial to us--and beneficial to Africa. Their situation here is unhappy and degraded. They are nominally

free, but not so substantially. They have none of the rights or privileges, or attributes of free men. They must ever exist, if they remain here, a distinct and degraded cast—immoral themselves, and demoralizing to others. Their influence on our slaves is a most injurious one. Lazy and dishonest in their habits, (with some exceptions to be sure,) they live on the white people, and corrupt the slaves to steal from their masters, and they become the receivers. Their presence and example, also exerts a much more pernicious influence, in rendering the slaves restless and dissatisfied with their condition. Whether or not the free negroes themselves, have ever been to any extent actually engaged in fomenting conspiracies and insurrections, nothing is more certain, than that they have an *indirect* influence in exciting them. They are themselves often unjustly suspected and cruelly treated, and no person can question, that they would be greatly better off if removed from our country.

But where is the domain? we were asked by the gentleman from Mecklenburg. Where have you gotten any territory to remove them to? *Liberia*, we are informed, is incapable of receiving but a limited number. Sir, I approach this branch of the subject with pleasure, and with the confident hope, that I shall be able to remove all difficulty from it.—We have heard various parts of the world spoken of as proper for the purpose. Our own possessions west of the Rocky mountains—*Hayti*—other West India islands—and even the acquisition of Texas, if practicable, has been alluded to as desirable, on which to place an intervening sable nation between the states of this union and Mexico. To all these, there are, in my opinion, insuperable objections. If residence on our own continent were not itself objectionable, the climate of our territory on the Columbia river, or elsewhere on that coast, is too cold to permit the existence of African descendants. To send them there, would be but legalized butchery. *Texas* is out of the question. It can probably not be acquired by our government for any purposes, and if we owned it already, it would be as impolitic in itself as unjust to our adjoining southwestern states, where slavery exists, to attempt to locate such a population so near to them. They would never consent to it. *Hayti* might receive a few, but is inadequate in its capacities to the demand. As for the English West India islands, they, Mr. Speaker, are, I think I can foresee, to be free in a few years. Yes, sir; if the reform bill should pass in the British Parliament, one of the first measures of the Reformed Government will be, the abolition of slavery in the West Indies. If it does not pass, there will be a revolution in the government—and, in either event, freedom will be established in the West Indies. That some of our colored population may find a resting place there, is indeed probable; but whether it would be desirable to place a very large portion of them there, if we could, is a question for reflection, which I do not deem it necessary to discuss. But, sir, whatever additional facilities may present themselves, *Africa*—yes, sir, persecuted and injured *Africa*—is, of all regions on the globe, the appropriate place for the deportation of our African descendants. Let us translate them to those realms from which, in evil times, under inauspicious influences, their fathers were unfortunately abducted—unfortunately for both par-

ties—unfortunately for them and their descendants—but much more unfortunately for those among whom an angry providence permitted them to be placed. Mr. Speaker, the idea of restoring these people to the region in which nature had planted them, and to whose climate she had fitted their constitutions—the idea of benefitting not only our condition and their condition by the removal, but making them the means of carrying back to a great continent, lost in the profoundest depths of savage barbarity, and unconscious of the existence even of the God who created them—not only the arts, and comforts, and multiplied advantages of civilized life, but what is of more value than all—a knowledge of true religion---intelligence of a Redeemer---is one of the grandest and noblest, one of the most expansive and glorious ideas which ever entered into the imagination of man. The conception---whether to the philosopher, the statesman, the philanthropist or the christian---of rearing up a colony, which is to be the nucleus around which future emigration will concentrate, and open all Africa to civilization and commerce, and science and arts, and religion---when “Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands,” indeed, is one, which warms the heart with delight.

Does Africa, then, afford the facilities and capacities for receiving them? Sir, the little colony of Liberia alone, founded by a private association, with limited means, having to encounter the prejudices of thousands in our own country, who would never examine its real objects or principles of action---and which had to subdue numerous disadvantages, within and without, incident to the infant exertion, has prospered already beyond all calculation. It contains at present a population of about 2,400---has established wholesome institutions and laws---established commercial relations with the surrounding tribes---and already exerts a most happy influence over large portions of Africa. It is said by men who know its condition, and are not enthusiasts, to be in a more prosperous condition than any other colony which has been founded in centuries. Its disadvantages were disheartening---but not so great as our own ancestors had to encounter, when they landed at Jamestown. You are aware, sir, that the possessions of the colony now, extend from the Gallinas river, on the north, to the territory of Kroo Settra, on the coast which is south of it---a distance of 280 miles in length---and that the country already under its actual jurisdiction, extends 150 miles along the coast, from Grand Cape Mount; near the mouth of the Pissou river, to Tradetown. The possessions already acquired by this private company, are capable of containing thousands of inhabitants---but why should we confine our observation to them? Regions of interminable extent, and possessing great advantages, can be acquired in Africa almost for a song. In one treaty, we could obtain territory enough to hold every negro in the United States---much more those in Virginia.---It is true we are very imperfectly acquainted with the geography of the interior of Africa; but recent explorations have reflected much additional light on the information which we formerly possessed. We know that there are at some distance in the interior, very extensive regions, peopled by sparse and wandering tribes, which are extremely fertile---and as healthy, from all appearances, as any other tropical cli-

mate. A letter was not long since received from Dr. Mecklin, the resident colonial agent, who had proceeded up the Mcsurado river to its source. He there found that the head waters of the Junk river were in the same neighborhood. He returned down that, and pursued its whole course for a great distance, to its mouth, less than forty miles from Monrovia; and to his great surprise, found it a wide and noble stream, capable of any inland navigation, and bordered by extensive plains of rich and valuable land---exhibiting appearances similar to the lands seen in tracing James river, from City Point to the ocean. In providing other tracts of territory, through the agency of the federal government, for the reception of any future increased number of emigrants, selections could be made, so judiciously, as with little expense, to give us the entire control of the whole southwest coast of Africa---enable us forever to put down the slave trade---and place the native tribes of the interior in dependence on the settlers from America. The present colony owns most of the valuable harbors now, if any of them can be called so, on an extended line of coast. By acquiring the island of Bulama, for instance, [a policy which I recollect to have seen somewhere recommended,] in the mouth of the Rio Grande, and within a short run from the Cape de Verds, and the point at which vessels from thence usually touch, on the north of the English settlement of Sierra Leone, [which, from causes well understood, has never flourished---and can never possess an extended influence,] and also obtaining Cape Palmas, on the southern extremity of the southwest coast---we should have a frontier which would include the mouths of the Rio Grande---the Gambia---Nunes, and Pongos, Sierra Leone, Cape Mount, and the Kroo nation, which constitutes the only native seamen in Africa. We should hold the commercial key of the whole south and west coasts, and as far east as the Bight of Biafra, and control as we pleased, the trade of the Gambia, the Senegal, and even of the Niger---the Ivory coast and the Gold Coast. So, sir, of all other objections, let us not be distressed by the difficulty, that we cannot find a *place* to carry our black population to.

Mr. Speaker---one objection has been urged to any legislative action on this subject---that it is calculated to impair the *value* of the slave property. To this idea, I have not devoted, heretofore, any particular attention. If the plan which I recommend involves any such consequence, I must, on my own principles, abandon it. But, sir, its operation, if introduced, will be precisely the reverse, if it shall exert any influence at all on their value. The abduction of the free negroes may increase the value of labor, and cannot impair, if it did not improve, the value of slaves. But the objection, I presume, is intended to rest principally on that feature in the plan, which proposes hereafter the purchase of slaves, or their removal, if surrendered without compensation, by the public funds. The price of slaves, probably, will decline in Virginia, whether we introduce any system like this or not---certainly, if the southwestern states shall prohibit their introduction there. And this reduction in value may give rise to a mistake as to its cause. Sir, it is not the *domestic* demand for slave labor, which has ever graduated their price here, but the *foreign* demand. Their labor is infinitely more productive, on the sugar,

and rice, and cotton plantations of the south and west, than it can ever be rendered in Virginia—and consequently the value here, must very much depend on the demand there. No man could, from mere pecuniary considerations, afford to give \$500 for a slave to be worked on an ordinary Virginia plantation, though many own slaves which they would not sell at any price. So that, if the number hereafter sent to those other states, be materially diminished, the value of them here must decline. But if such should be the result, it will not be the consequence of any system like that which I recommend. On the contrary, it is an acknowledged principle of political economy, that as the supply of any article is diminished, the demand is increased and the value improved. If, for instance, by any operation, a fourth or a half of all the slaves in Virginia were removed, would not those who remain be more valuable? And will not the effect of throwing an augmented capital into the market, as before intimated, have the same tendency?

But what if the gradual abduction of part of our black population, were to cause some pecuniary loss? Are the people prepared to make no sacrifice to attain an object so desirable as this holds out? I know, sir, that it is one of the weakest points of our nature—all history proves it to be true of individuals and nations—to cling with pertinacity to all we possess—and thus to peril all, rather than by giving up a portion, to secure the residue. The lessons of experience are exhibited to us in vain. “No man profits by the experience of others—he must pay for it himself.” And he often does it dearly. At this very moment we see the aristocracy of England, rather than submit to a moderate reform in the government, and consequent abatement of a portion of their exclusive privileges, are jeopardizing the whole—and nothing prevents an immediate explosion—a dreadful revolution in England, but the fact, that the king is on the side of the people, and they hope thus eventually to attain their object, without a recurrence to the *ultima ratio*. Such was the fate of the ancient monarchy of France—and the principle is more or less illustrated, in the history of almost every nation, and the biography of almost every individual. So, here, the minds of some, seem to revolt at the idea of losing part of their slaves, even on just compensation. Sir, we shall have to surrender a part, on some terms, or eventually to lose the whole. Not soon, sir, but by their ultimate extirpation, and in the manner I have depicted. If the people of Virginia—many of those at least who are in the habit of reflecting most intensely and deciding most accurately—see that no effort is to be made to avert the probable consequences of the present course of things, but learn that it is settled that the Old Dominion is, to the end of time, to remain as she is—her bright and towering prospects will become overclouded—they will desert the land of their nativity, and remove to fairer fields, where no such difficulties impend. But if they could see only the incipient efforts made—some plan proposed—no matter how far in advance its inceptive action should be placed—no matter how gradually or slowly the process was to operate—some rational hope presented that the existing order of things was not to continue forever, but that there was to be a diminution, if not extinction, of the evils of an overflowing black population, they would

rest satisfied. The young would abandon the thoughts of removal, and the old would cry out in the language of ancient Simeon, "*Nunc Domine, dimittas.*"

Mr. Speaker, I am aware, that by the frank and unreserved expression that I have given to my sentiments on this vitally interesting subject, I may have called down on my head, denunciations from those who view it in a different aspect, and who go farther than I am willing to go, or who fall short of me. I feel that I have little of public standing, or capacity for public usefulness to lose---but had I as much moral and political weight of character as ever rested on mortal man, I would peril it all in such a cause as this. The prosperity of the country is at stake, and I will speak freely what I honestly think. "It is my own---my native land," and what I can do, I will do, to save her. As soon would I think of deserting a mother in distress, as of leaving her in her present situation. We have listened to many lugubrious descriptions of her worn fields, and desolated condition---and of the sorrowing breeze, sighing through the tops of her pines. But she is my country; and for one, I will stand by her, through evil report as well as good. All that I have---whatever interest I possess on earth---is embarked on board the old vessel, and I will remain with her,---let her sink or swim.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot resume my seat, without an unaffected and grateful expression of my thanks to you, and to the house, for the very patient and polite attention, with which you have regarded the remarks I have submitted, and which have been greatly more discursive and lengthy than I had intended when I commenced them.

APPENDIX.

As much misapprehension has existed, as to the provisions of the bill for the removal of free persons of color from the commonwealth, as originally reported from the committee, of which Mr. Brodnax was chairman, and especially as to the character of that *compulsory feature* in it, by which all were eventually to be deported, but none contrary to their consent, so long as any are found willing to go—and even then, under the most humane regulations—involving the severance of no domestic ties or connexions—and excepting from its operation all such as the county courts might allow, from their age or exemplary conduct—as this feature has not only been ill-conceived as to its effects, but branded as a measure of inhumanity and cruelty, it is deemed proper to append here, the remarks of Mr. Brodnax on that particular section of the bill, to exhibit the real character of the proposed measure, and the reasons on which his opinions were formed.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1832.

On motion of Mr. Brodnax, the house resolved itself into a committee of the whole, on the "bill to provide for the removal of free persons of color from this commonwealth."

The first section of the bill having been read, Mr. Brodnax remarked, that it was well understood by the gentlemen who had examined the bill, that one of its fundamental principles was that *compulsory feature* in the system, by which *force* was eventually to be resorted to, in relation to such free persons of color as might be unwilling to remove from the state—that many of the subsequent details were consequential to this, and would become inapplicable, should this substratum be removed. If the principle were retained, the bill would, probably, require but little amendment elsewhere; if it be rejected, its numerous provisions would have to be moulded into accommodation with the adverse principle established; and on that latter contingency, all the time of going through the entire bill in committee of the whole would be lost. It was known that a great diversity of opinion existed on the expediency of introducing that feature into any legislation at present. He presumed, from what he had elsewhere heard, that a majority would be found opposed to it;—in that state of things he had risen to recommend it to some gentleman who stood thus opposed to this important principle, to move the amendment of the first section, which could readily be done, so as to present the question directly to our consideration, and if the amendment be sustained, the most judicious course, would be for the committee of the whole immediately to rise, report the bill, and for the house to recommit it to the select committee, with instructions to amend it conformably with the principle established.

Mr. Campbell of Brooke said that, as one of the minority of the committee which reported the bill, and opposed to the principle contained in its first section, he moved to amend it by the insertion after the word *shall* in the third line, of the words "with their own consent." He apprehended that it was unnecessary for him now to go at length into the many reasons for his opposition to the compulsory feature of the bill. If, however, any member desired an explanation of his views he was prepared to make it.

Mr. Brodnax said, that if he supposed a full, elaborated discussion of the question now presented, could be necessary, or was even desired by the house, he should very much regret his inability, from a severe cold, to take an active participation in it. But he concurred with the gentleman from Brooke, that this could not then be necessary. The subject had long been under consideration in some aspect or other, and not a member, probably was present, who had not formed some definitive opinion. He could not, however, withhold the expression of a few views on a subject which he regarded as essentially connected with the best interests of the state, and one which he frankly confessed he had very much at heart. The question now involved, is simply, whether or not any compulsory measures are to be resorted to, to compel the removal of the free negroes from among us, *after* all who consent shall have been transported? Looking entirely to the *result*, (without regard to the *mode* by which it is to be effected,) it will be found that this is not a question of the importance which is ascribed to it. Pass the law in either aspect, and this unhappy race *will be removed*. It is idle to talk about not resorting to force. Every body must look to the introduction of force of some kind or other—and it is in truth a question of expediency; of moral justice; of political good faith—whether we shall fairly delineate our whole system on the face of the bill, or leave the ac-

quisition of extorted consent to other processes. The real question—the only question of magnitude to be settled, is the great preliminary question—Do you intend to send the free persons of color out of Virginia, or not?—This question should be met boldly, and decided frankly. On that question he had supposed a greater unanimity existed among our constituents, and among their delegates here, than on any measure of general interest which could engage their deliberations—and, believing so, he certainly should not undertake to discuss the general question. I confess, said Mr. B., that were it not for the high opinion I entertain of the ingenuous character of the opponents of this coercive feature, I should doubt their sincerity, when they tell me, that they are clear for sending away the free negroes out of the United States; but are opposed to using any compulsion about it. And even now, I cannot look at these two propositions, placed in juxtaposition, without perceiving that they involve a contradiction and an absurdity, unless you associate with them a third proposition, which no gentleman, who forms a component part of this committee, it seems to me, can believe—that is, that the free negroes of Virginia are, in truth, *willing* to be removed from the United States. Sir, does any gentleman believe this? If they are sincere in their intention to remove the free blacks, they must come to the results provided in that bill—or they must look to some more exceptionable mode of compulsion—or they must believe these people will consent to be transported. Can they believe the latter? The gentleman from Brooke expresses the belief that a considerable proportion of our free persons of color will voluntarily consent to go. Sir, I am not surprised at that gentleman's entertaining such an opinion, for he comes from a part of our state where there are comparatively none of this class. But will any member say so, who represents a county where the number is great, and who has had opportunities of judging correctly of their prejudices and opinions? Sir, this has been to me a subject of long and painful reflection. It is one of great delicacy and embarrassment—nothing but the highest considerations—nothing short of the most conscientious conviction that their own good, as well as our happiness would be promoted by it—or the most imperative and clearly defined necessity, would induce me to think of removing a whole class of our population from the land;—as it is, I regard the measure, in the language of this preamble, “not only one of sound policy, but one indicated by considerations of enlightened philanthropy.” But the question is not now before us, whether it is *right* or *just* to remove them? that will occur in a different mode hereafter—At present, the affirmative is assumed, and the question is, if they *are* to be removed, shall *compulsion* be excluded? If the free negroes are *willing* to go, they will go—if not willing, they must be compelled to go. Some gentlemen think it politic, not now to insert this feature in the bill, though they proclaim their readiness to resort to it when it becomes necessary: they think that for a year or two a sufficient number will consent to go, and then the rest can be compelled. For my part, I deem it better to approach the question and settle it at once, and avow it openly. The intelligent portion of the free negroes know very well what is going on. Will they not see your debates? Will they not see that coercion is ultimately to be resorted to? They will perceive that the edict has gone forth; and that it must fall, if not now, in a short time upon them. If capable of any reflection, they will know, that go they *must*, and possibly consent may at once be affected by some. It is useless to discuss the question whether we should compel those to remove who are already willing to do so; but it is upon those who are unwilling, that the coercion is to operate. Who has not observed the proceedings of the great meeting of free negroes last summer at Baltimore, and that they are not only utterly opposed to emigration themselves, but are making exertions to dissuade all others of the same class, throughout our country? They have, no doubt, emissaries at work every where, prejudicing these ignorant people against the Colonization Society, and all removal. The numbers willing to go, are fewer and fewer every day; and out of about 50,000 free negroes in Virginia, I have no idea, from the most extensive inquiries, that 1,000 could be found *really* willing to go in five years. I inquired of a gentleman of this city, of intelligence and excellent opportunities of judging, how many from all that numerous population in Richmond would, he supposed, be *willing* now to remove, if every facility were tendered—He replied, not one. But suppose one-third, or one half would consent to be deported from their native shores—and you are then to stop. Will you undertake this system on such terms? Will you burden your constituents with taxes for so imperfect a remedy to the existing evils? The object in view, would not be commensurate in importance with the means we are exerting. But, if after those are removed, we intend in truth to carry out the system on the residue, I ask if it would not be more just, and frank, and magnanimous, to come out at once, and declare to all these people, what it is you really intend in the first instance, and what are your ultimate objects. Tell them, as this bill does, we will not remove a single one against his consent, while one is found willing to go—we will lighten the hardship of the system as much as possible, by the most humane regulations—we will sever no domestic ties—separate no families—permit the county courts and local tribunals to direct the exclusion or inclusion of any particular families or individuals for merit, or crime, or other considerations; but, ultimately, all must go, except such as are excused from their age, or exemplary conduct. Do this, and the people, and the objects to be operated on themselves, would know the full extent of the proposed measure, and what they had to depend upon. It would be unfair, and most injurious to them, to conceal the compulsory feature now, with a mental reservation, that it is to be adopted hereafter. Let them but know it in time, and they could be preparing for it. They could sell their little property, and settle their affairs: strike out this feature, and you tantalize them with false losses, and

when the compulsory measure shall be resorted to, it will fall on them more heavily, because more unexpectedly.

But, sir, there is another consequence of inevitable occurrence, if this feature be expunged, which I cannot contemplate without horror. You are to pass a law for the removal of such only as are *willing* to go. I have already expressed it as my opinion that few, very few, will *reluctantly* consent to emigrate, if no compulsory measure be adopted. With it—many, in anticipation of its sure and certain arrival, will, in the mean time, go away—they will be sensible that the time would come when they would be forced to leave the state. Without it—you will still, no doubt, have applicants for removal equal to your means. Yes, sir, people who will not only consent, but beg you to deport them. But what sort of *consent*—a consent extorted by a series of oppressions calculated to render their situation among us insupportable. Many of those who have already been sent off, went with *their accrued consent*, but under the influence of a more decided compulsion than any which this bill holds out. I will not express, in its full extent the idea I entertain of what has been done, or what enormities will be perpetrated to induce this class of persons to leave the state. Who does not know that when a free negro, by crime or otherwise, has rendered himself obnoxious to a neighborhood, how easy it is for a party to visit him one night, take him from his bed and family, and apply to him the gentle admonition of a severe flagellation, to induce him to *consent* to go away. In a few nights the dose can be repeated, perhaps increased, until, in the language of the physicians, *quantum suff.* has been administered to produce the desired operation; and the fellow then becomes *perfectly willing* to move away. I have certainly heard, if incorrectly, the gentleman from Southampton will put me right, that of the large cargo of emigrants lately transported from that county to Liberia, all of whom *professed* to be *willing* to go, most of them were rendered so, by some such severe ministrations as those I have described.* A Lynch club—a committee of vigilance—could easily exercise a kind of inquisitorial *surveillance* over any neighborhood; and convert any desired number, I have no doubt, at any time, into a willingness to be removed. But who really prefers such means as these to the course proposed in this bill? And one or the other is inevitable. For no matter how you change this bill—sooner or later the free negroes will be *forced* to leave the state. Indeed, sir, all of us look to force of some kind or other, direct or indirect, moral or physical, legal or illegal. Many who are opposed, they say, to any compulsory feature in the bill, desire to introduce such severe regulations into our police laws—such restrictions of their existing privileges—such inability to hold property—obtain employment—rent residences, &c., as to make it impossible for them to remain among us. Is not this force?

I am one of those who think legal force less exceptionable than private or indirect compulsion—because, it will be more general and uniform in its application—because it will be more just and impartial in its operation—because it will be *known* beforehand, and can be provided for—because it is more consistent with open dealing and public faith—because the other will be harsh, arbitrary, capricious, unequal, unexpected, unjust, and cruel. Under this bill their consent would be won by mild means—none to be compelled in the first instance—and even, ultimately, every precaution which humanity can dictate, is interposed for their comfort.

I have not been sanguine for some days, that any efficient measure would be adopted on this subject, though all of us profess anxiety to effect something. Some of us are opposed to any measure, if compulsion is to be resorted to. Some tell you they foresee that it is to be stricken out, and that they cannot then support it. Some are opposed to force, because they are, in truth, enemies to any bill on the subject, and think that thus the measure will be rendered inefficient. Some are opposed to it, because they are not willing to adopt such a measure at *this session*—they wish to put off the unpleasant cup one year. Some are opposed to force, because they honestly believe, that subjects for transportation can be found in sufficient numbers without it. And some, because they prefer *private influences* to legally authorised compulsion. Among these discrepant views, I fear that the just expectations of our constituents, are not to be realized.

Some are of opinion, that if force be introduced, we are depriving ourselves of the aid of the Colonization Society. But why so? The society will be willing to aid us in the transportation of all who *consent* to go—and it will only become necessary for us to resort to other means *after* all have been removed that this society, from its established principles, *could remove*. So that we lose nothing in that way. It is said, too, that we are dependent exclusively on Liberia to receive them—that its capacities for reception are so limited, that it is unnecessary at present to provide for the removal of all the colored population. Sir, the bill looks to the acquisition of additional territory, which can readily be acquired, by means proposed on your table, to an extent, capable of sustaining ten times the amount of this population.

*Mr. B. understanding, after he had closed his remarks, that these observations were construed by some, as implying a censure on the Colonization Society, and to convey the idea that *its* agents had removed persons of color whose *consent* had been *forced*, with the knowledge or approbation of the society, rose again and disclaimed it promptly and earnestly—stating that he himself had long been an humble member of that society and scarcely could have designed an impeachment of the purity of its motives, or the correctness of its proceedings. That the free negroes to whom he alluded had had their *consent extorted*, if at all, long before they had applied to this society for transportation, and that he had no idea that the agents of the society were aware of it—much less active in it.

I have heard of one objection to this measure, at which I was certainly surprised. It was a *constitutional* impediment to this compulsory principle. Really, Mr. Speaker, I have always supposed that I was, according to the strictest test, a Pharisee in my political opinions—that if there was, what is usually denominated on the south side, a strict state's right man, in the world, that I was one. But of late, I so often read and hear of the constitution being introduced in opposition to every sort of thing, that I fear that mantle, which has hitherto protected us from so many evils, will become threadbare, or torn to pieces, from absolute ridicule and contempt. I wish gentlemen would point out what part of the constitution it is—what clause—what section, that this principle violates. In truth, free negroes have many *legal* rights and privileges in Virginia, but no *constitutional* ones—they are not citizens, or members of the body politic; but suppose they were, it will surely not be contended, that the constitution denies or withdraws such a *power*? We are not discussing the policy, the humanity, or the justice of deporting these people by force—that belongs to a different branch of the subject;—not simply the *constitutional power* which the state government possesses to effect such an object. Sir, the state not only has this power, but it has been repeatedly exercised, and has been acquiesced in by every department of the government. A statute some years ago commuted the previous punishment of free negroes for certain offences, and provided that, on conviction, they should forfeit their freedom, be sold as slaves, and sent out of the state. The Legislature enacted it—the Judiciary, in a full general court, decided,—on that point being expressly made for adjudication,—that the law was not unconstitutional; and the Executive department executed the decision. It does not affect this question—that this punishment was for *crime*—and the deportation here to be enforced, does not presuppose offence. That may be an argument against the *expediency* of the measure, but does not touch the *constitutional question*—whether the government possesses the *power* of enacting such a provision?—And if it possesses the power, it is to judge of the circumstances under which it may be judicious to exercise it? Indeed, it seems to me rather a morbid exhibition of sensibility, to talk about its being unconstitutional to send a free negro out of the state, when we have, every now and then, to send, not only free negroes, but white men also—not only out of the state, but out of *the world*. We may imprison, banish, or hang white or black, but not *compel* a free negro to remove, to where his condition will be infinitely better than it ever can be here! I do not think that there can be any just, constitutional scruples involved; and on the score of humanity, I really think that all the humanity and mercy connected with this question, are on my side of it—that those will be much more happily constituted, by retaining this compulsory feature in the bill, than by expunging it.